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黒木香＋ベイブリッジ・スタジオ

月と湖

FC FLOWER COMICS
ベツコミフラワーコミックス

The Moon and the Lake

Ashihara Hinako

The Moon and the Lake Ashihara Hinako

FLOWER COMICS

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Summary

After her novelist grandfather died, among the things he left behind was an unpublished first person narrative in it, the feelings toward the mistress of one who should have been a loving husband are revealed. Kaoruna, confused by the fickleness of peoples hearts decides to pay a visit to this mistress..! A brilliant, painful love story from the pen of Hinako Ashihara.

Contents

The Moon and the Lake
The Fields in December

Profile of Ashihara Hinako

* Aquarius, born on Friday, 25th of January. Blood type O
* Debut work was "I Reject that Rumor" (October 1994 issue of Bessatsu Comics)
* Now working on a project for Betsucomi (Bessatsu Comics)

Message from the Author

There are two short sequels, one is about the kids while the other is about the adults. However, both stories revolve around a book.

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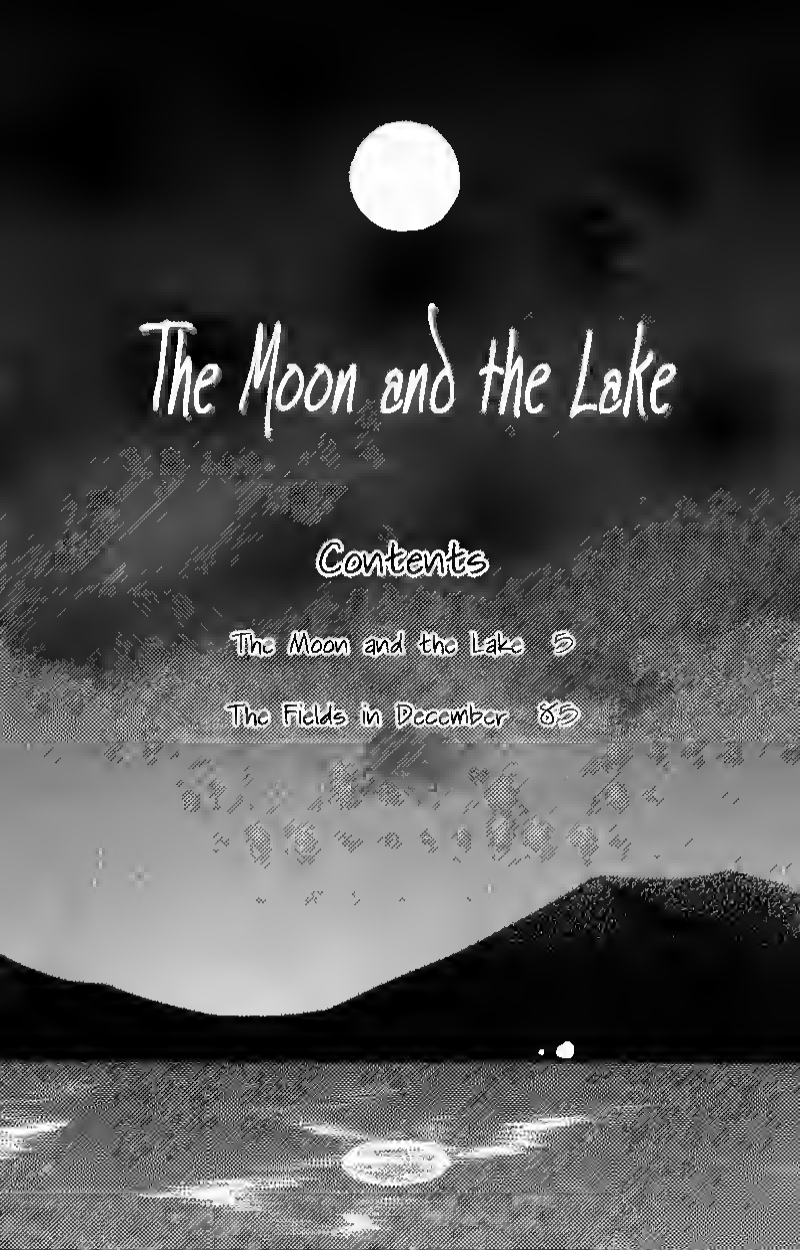
The Moon and the Lake
Ashihara Hinako
Betsucomi Flower Comics



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The Fields in December 85

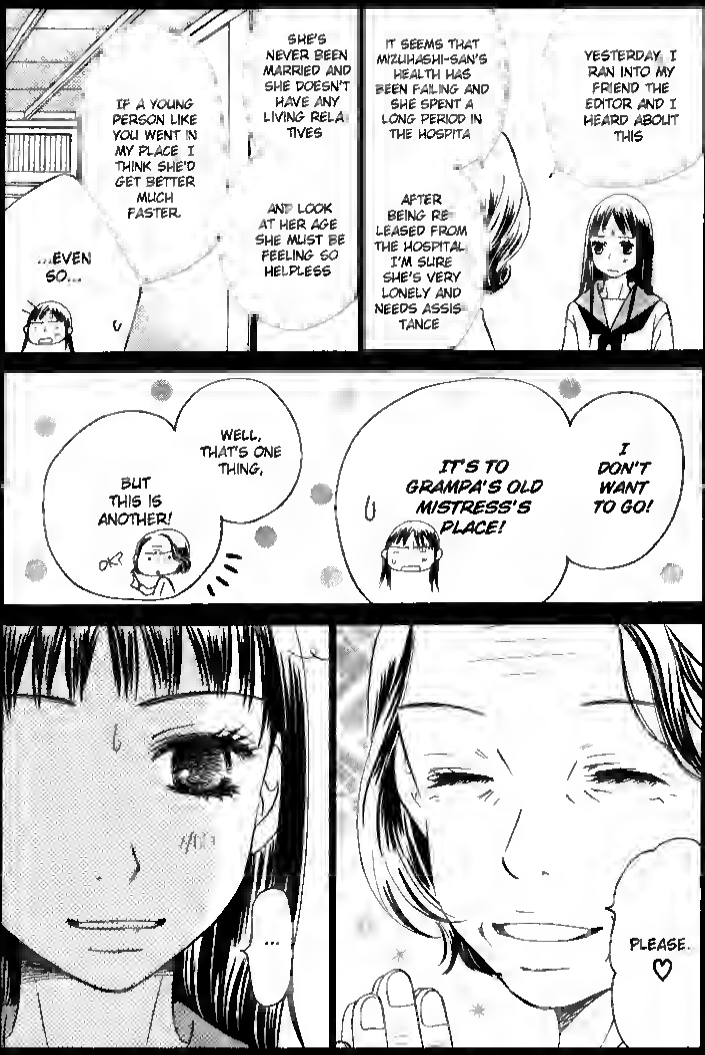
The Moon and the Lake

Things have turned out this way...
CLANG
I wonder why
My Books
The Moon and the Lake
Ichihara Yusei
CLANG
BANG
BAM
AH! IT'S ICHIHARA YUUSEI'S VACATION HOUSE!
Really? Where?

That's right
TRUE LOVE?
Ichihara Yumeo...
NO WAY! JUST MALE INFIDELITY!
IT WAS AN OVERNIGHT SENSATION. WHAT WAS IT CALLED AGAIN... YOU KNOW, THE NARRATIVE ABOUT HAVING A LOVE AFFAIR...
ICHIHARA YUMEO!... IS THAT A WRITER?
THE MOON AND THE LAKE!
Yeah! That's the one!
DUMB

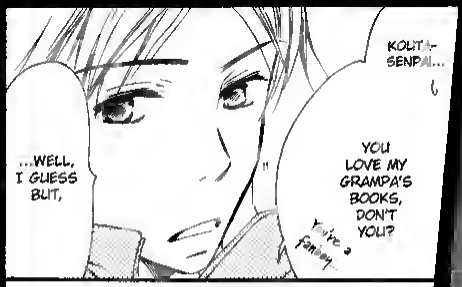
What?
I HAVE TO?
He was my grandfather.
...passed on twelve years ago.

I want you to go
WELL...
YEAH, BUT...
KAZUNA,
YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING TO COLLEGE NOW IT'S SPRING VACATION, AND YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO
AH, WHY?
I HAVE TO GO HELP OUT AT THE HOUSE OF MIZUHASHI TOUKO?


YESTERDAY, I RAN INTO MY FRIEND THE EDITOR AND I HEARD ABOUT THIS
IT SEEMS THAT MIZUHASHI-SAN'S HEALTH HAS BEEN FAILING AND SHE SPENT A LONG PERIOD IN THE HOSPITA
AFTER BEING RE LEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL I'M SURE SHE'S VERY LONELY AND NEEDS ASSIS TANCE
SHE'S NEVER BEEN MARRIED AND SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY LIVING RELA TIVES
AND LOOK AT HER AGE SHE MUST BE FEELING SO HELPLESS
IF A YOUNG PERSON LIKE YOU WENT IN MY PLACE I THINK SHE'D GET BETTER MUCH FASTER.
...EVEN SO...
I DON'T WANT TO GO!
IT'S TO GRAMPA'S OLD MISTRESS'S PLACE!
WELL, THAT'S ONE THING,
BUT THIS IS ANOTHER!
...
PLEASE. ♡

WHAT
YOU'RE NOT GOING ON OUR SPRING SKI TRIP, KAZUNA?!
SORRY ...
I EVEN GOT OUT OF TAKING A TEST FOR THIS TRIP!
FUMI-SENPAI SAID HE COULDN'T MAKE IT TO WORK... THIS ISN'T GOING TO SIT WELL!
KOUTA-SENPAI, YOU'RE GOING, RIGHT?
YEAH, WELL...
SORRY KAZUNA, DURING THIS TRIP I'M GOING TO STEAL KOUTA-SENPAI AWAY FROM YOU ♡
I'M SORRY KOUTA-SENPAI I THOUGHT WE WOULD FINALLY HAVE A CHANCE TO SPEND SOME TIME TOGETHER.
...WELL IN THE SPRING WE'LL BE ATTENDING THE SAME UNIVERSITY, SO I'LL BE FINE, BUT...
ARE YOU OK?
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO, RIGHT? TO THAT PLACE?
YEAH...
MY GRANDMA USUALLY DOESN'T ASK ME FOR FAVORS...
BUT,
I'm weak.
...IT'S ONLY FOR TEN DAYS, SO I'LL DEAL WITH IT.

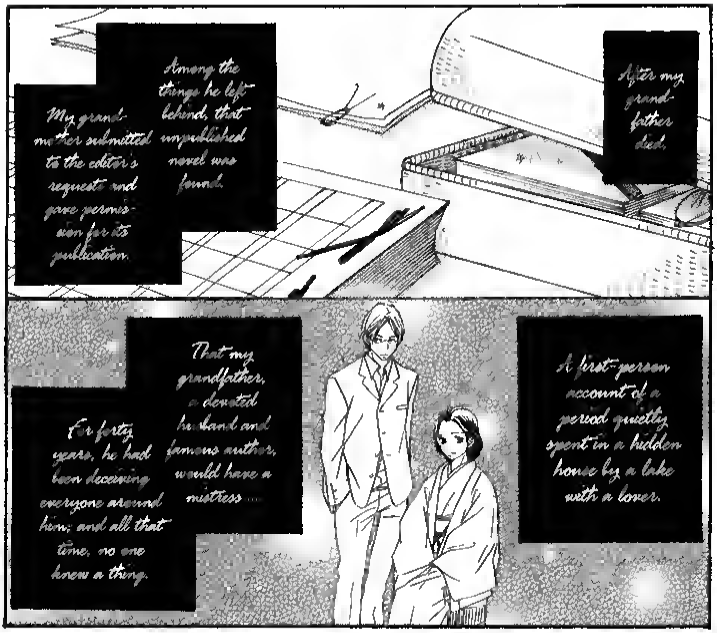
KAZUNA, DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU HAVEN'T READ IT? THAT BOOK...
YEAH, GRAMPA'S BOOK, IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT...
I JUST CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO READ IT...
Like I thought

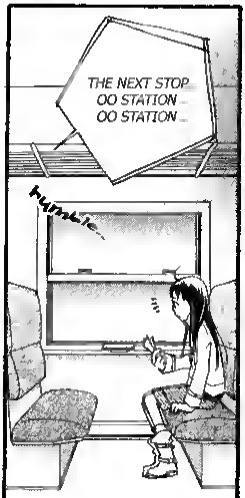

KOUTA-SENPAI...
YOU LOVE MY GRAMPA'S BOOKS, DON'T YOU?
You're a fantasy...
...WELL, I GUESS BUT,

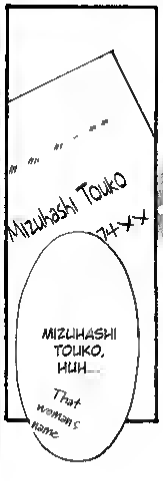
THOSE BOOKS ...
THEY AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS THAT I LIKE.

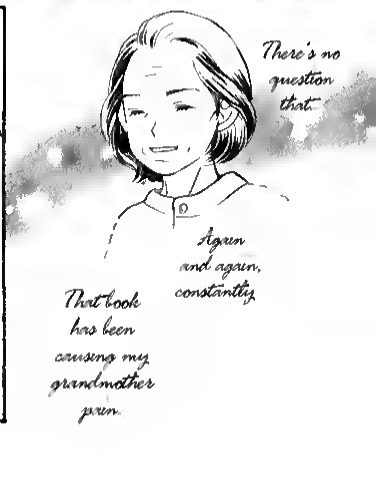
THE MOON AND THE LAKE. HUH...

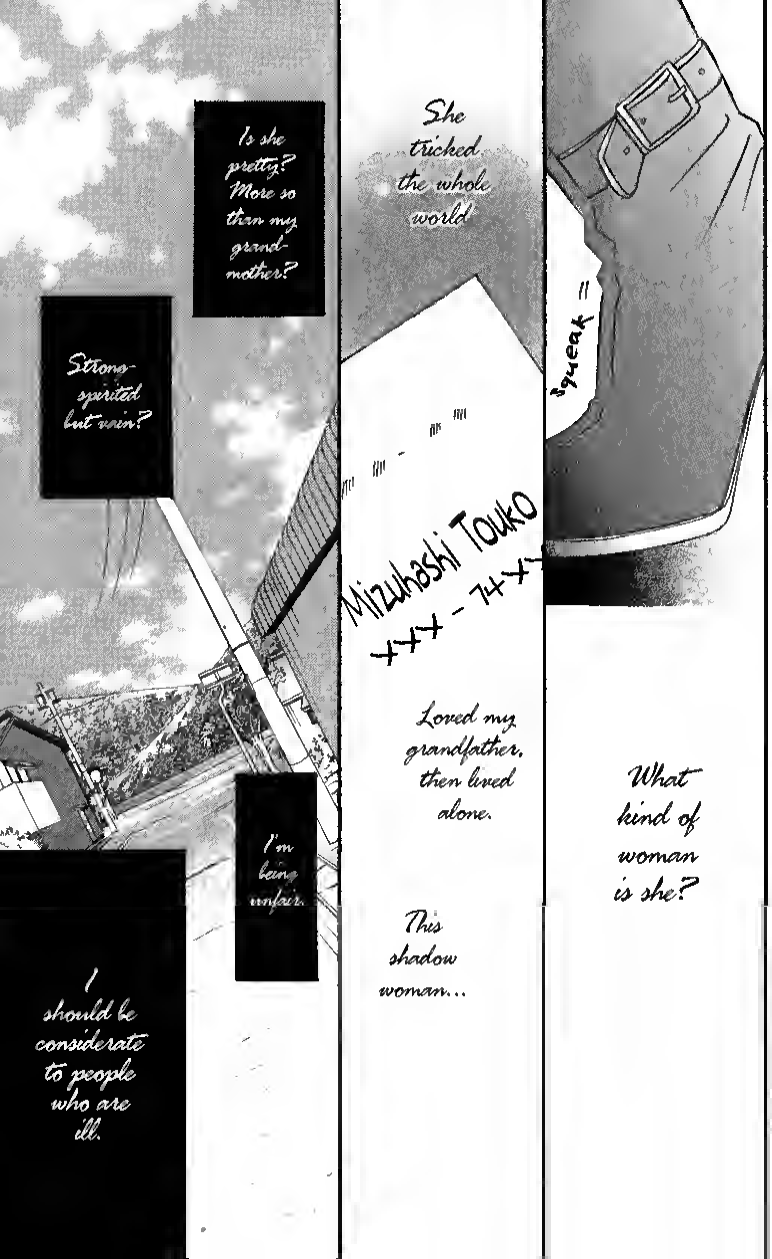
Remaining married his whole life to his loving wife...
...is what he should have done.
A man's story...
Squeeze
"The Moon and the Lake," huh...
Scrapal You hold hands the other way!
Here! Here!
Huh ?


After my grandfather died,
Among the things he left behind, that unpublished novel was found.
My grandmother submitted to the editor's request and gave permission for its publication.
A first-person account of a period quietly spent in a hidden house by a lake with a lover.
That my grandfather, a devoted husband and famous author, would have a mistress ....
For forty years, he had been deceiving everyone around him; and all that time, no one knew a thing.

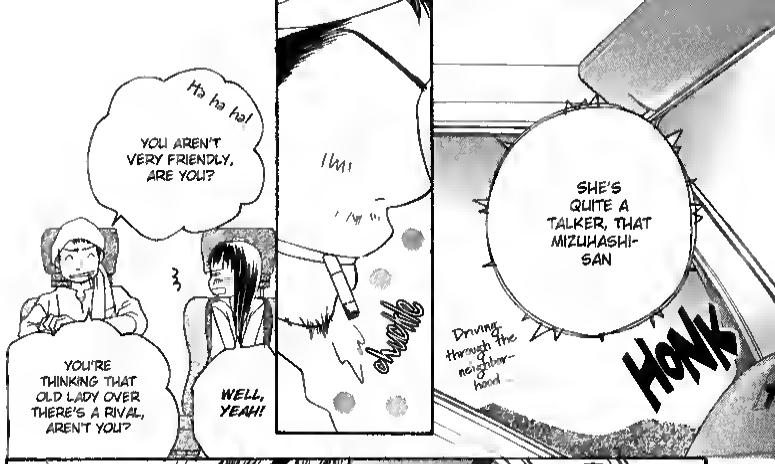

THE NEXT STOP IS OO STATION ... OO STATION ...
Hmmm...


Mizuhashi Touko
MIZUHASHI TOUKO, HUH....
That woman's name


There's no question that...
Again and again, constantly.
That book has been causing my grandmother pain.

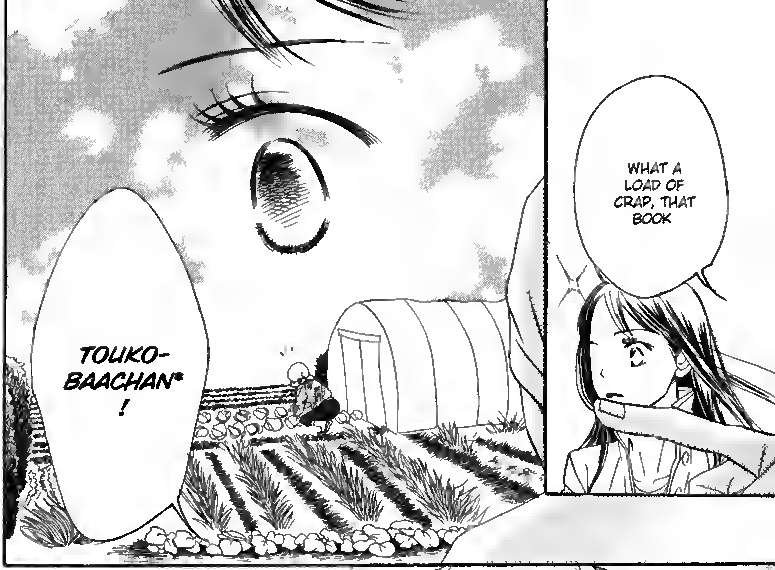

Is she pretty? More so than my grandmother?
Strong-spirited but vain?
I'm being unfair.
I should be considerate to people who are ill.
She tricked the whole world
squeak
Mizuhashi Touko
Loved my grandfather, then lived alone.
This shadow woman...
What kind of woman is she?

I'm too rude.
The old lady said you'd be coming in today
YOU'RE HER RIGHT?
GRAND-DAUGHTER OF THE FAMOUS AUTHOR'S REAL WIFE
DO YOU KNOW IT?
IT'S PRETTY FAR IF YOU WALK YOU WANT A RIDE?
I won't bite
SHE'S IN MY NEIGH-BOR-HOOD
AH, OF COURSE
Mizuhashi Touko
××-7H××
TO GRANNY MIZUHASHI'S PLACE
Probably this way?
HONK HONK
Lost
UM, GRAMPA'S VACATION HOUSE WAS OVER THERE, SO..
SCREECH
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
SO BEAUTIFUL! THE WATER'S SPARKLING..!
Oh, yeah!
I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR SIGHT-SEEING!


Ha ha ha!
YOU AREN'T VERY FRIENDLY, ARE YOU?
YOU'RE THINKING THAT OLD LADY OVER THERE'S A RIVAL, AREN'T YOU?
WELL, YEAH!
crumple
SHE'S QUITE A TALKER, THAT MIZUHASHI-SAN
Driving through the neighborhood
HONK
IF YOU HATE IT THAT MUCH, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO COME

SHE SUPPORTED MY GRANDPA WITH HER LIFE
AND DESPITE ALL THAT...
SHE'S AN AMAZING PERSON! REALLY!
MY GRANDMA...
SHE WAS RAISED RICH SO SHE'S A BIT IMPULSIVE, BUT... SHE'S REALLY NICE!
SHE'S PRETTY NO MATTER HOW OLD SHE IS...
crumple
I WANTED TO SEE FOR MYSELF, LIKE
WHAT KIND OF WOMAN SHE IS...

WE'RE HERE...
SLAM
GRANNY ...!
HUH, SHE'S NOT HERE? MAYBE THE GARDEN.
I'M SURPRISED... THE HOUSE IS REALLY WELL KEPT
I was imagining she'd be living a more careless lifestyle
I... HAVEN'T REALLY READ IT.
But I know basically how it goes.
OH, REALLY?
I read it! Even me!
SHE WAS BASICALLY ALONE, WITHOUT ANY RELATIVES AT ALL, LEVEL-HEADED, BUT STILL WEAK...
THEY WERE A COUPLE THAT FELL IN LOVE IN A WAY THAT TOUCHED THE HEART
YOU KNOW, THE "MISTRESS" FROM THAT NOVEL,
SHE'S A REALLY DELICATE BEAUTY, SHE IS.
Heh heh heh!
That way



*Translator's note: "Baachan" = "Granny".

HELLO? GRANDMA?
EVERYTHING I'VE HEARD IS COMPLETELY FALSE!
OH, ABOUT WHAT...?
OH, I THINK THAT'S A PACKAGE FOR ME! I'M HANGING UP, KAZUNA
KAZUNA-CHAN
WAI-
DING DONG
SHE ISN'T UNDER THE WEATHER AT ALL!
SHE'S HUMMING A SONG WHILE PLANTING POTATOES!
MIZUHASHI-SAN IS HEALTHY AND CHEERFUL!
A down-to-earth, Sun-dried,
Woman smelling of fresh fertilizer?
BLEEEHH
UGH
I'm sorry!
OH, I'VE BEEN USING NATURAL FERTILIZER ♡
It's organic!

HELP ME OUT. ♡
Huh
YOU'RE A GREAT HELP..!
rip
rip
rip
TOYODA-SAN WHO USUALLY COMES TO WORK FOR ME IS WITH HIS WIFE, WHO'S ABOUT TO HAVE A BABY
JUST ONE PERSON ISN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
rip
rip
rip
CAN I JUST TAKE THESE OVER THERE?
SURE, THANKS
I CAN'T STAND THIS ANYMORE I WISH I COULD JUST BE DONE WITH ALL OF THIS
MY GRANDMA IS MUCH CUTER
Huff
Huff
YOU AND YOUR GRAND-MOTHER
DO YOU HEAR THAT A LOT?
YOU DO LOOK ALIKE
HAVE YOU EVER MET HER? MY GRAND-MOTHER..
NO.
ONLY IN A PICTURE OF THEM TOGETHER IN A MAGAZINE LONG AGO

TWELVE YEARS AGO, AFTER THE MOON AND THE LAKE WAS PUBLISHED,
I WAS GOING TO SAY A WORD OF APOLOGY, SO I WENT TO VISIT HER HOME, BUT...
I WASN'T GRANTED A MEETING...
Of course not
WHEN THEY FOUND THAT BOOK, I WAS STILL JUST A KID
WHEN MY GRANDMOTHER FOUND OUT THE TRUTH.
I REMEMBER HER BREAKING DOWN AND SOBBING WHILE EVERYONE WAS WATCHING.
AND AFTER IT WAS PUBLISHED, ANYONE WHO WAS INTERESTED FOUND OUT ABOUT IT, TOO
NO MATTER HOW MANY PUBLISHERS MANAGED TO GET THEIR HANDS ON IT,
I FEEL THAT THAT BOOK SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED
I...
THAT BOOK,
I LIKED IT.

HELLO? KOUTA-SENPAI?
YEAH, SHE'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN I THOUGHT.
SHE'S NOT A BIT SHY...
YOU DON'T LIKE HER?
WELL, NO... IT ISN'T LIKE THAT.
KOUTA SENPAI, YOU'RE GOING WITH EVERY ONE ELSE TO THE SKI TRIP TOMORROW, AREN'T YOU?
YEAH, I'M PACK-ING RIGHT NOW.
MAN, I WISH I COULD GO WITH YOU GUYS...
Should I let you go?
ONCE YOU GET BACK, WE'LL DO LOTS OF THINGS TO-GETHER
CAUSE YOU WERE WORKING SO HARD TO PASS THAT EN TRANCE EXAM,
I'LL TAKE YOU ANY-WHERE YOU WANT TO GO
HM, THANKS
FIRST, HOW ABOUT DISNEY-LAND?
Heh!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO LIKES MICKEY, SENPAI!
NO, THAT'S PUU-SAN

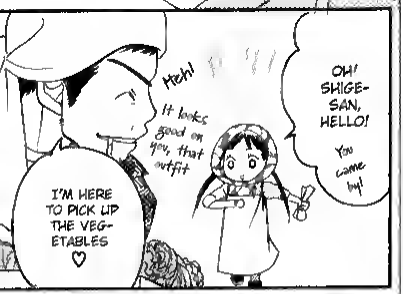
KAZUNA?

...AH, SORRY. THE MOON... IT'S COMING UP OVER THE LAKE AND IT'S REALLY... Pretty
THE MOON?
OH...
THE SCENERY,
IN THE BOOK... THE SCENERY IS MENTIONED A BUNCH OF TIMES. I think.
REALLY?
The Moon and the Lake

WHEN THEY WERE WATCHING THE MOON,
THE STRONG WOMAN ALWAYS SEEMED REALLY REALISTIC
"IT'D BE NICE..."
"IF THERE WERE TWO MOONS..."

PEEEWW...
...
THIS IS GOOD FERTILIZER!
Heh heh heh heh
SHE... SHE SEEMS...
ORGANIC VEGETABLES,
HERBS
-MARJORUM
-LEMON GRASS
-DILL
-PARSLEY
AND AN HERB GARDEN ...
KAZUNA-CHAN I WONDER IF I COULD GET YOU TO HELP ME WITH THE HERB GARDEN, TOO?
It's really convenient to have young people around!
SHE DOESN'T HESITATE TO ASK...
"EVEN IF IT WASN'T REAL..."
"EVEN IF IT WASN'T TANGIBLE..."
"It'd be nice..."
"If there were two of you who loved me."

THIS FIELD IS PRETTY BIG.
BUT THERE'S REALLY NOT THAT MUCH IN IT.
I SELL IT TO THE LOCAL RESTAURANTS AND VILLAGERS
My vegetables are delicious!
YOU JUST GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL THOUGH... YOU SHOULDN'T OVERWORK YOURSELF
I LOVE WORKING!
It's kind of worrying me, too.
THAT'S THE LEAST A WOMAN LIVING ON HER OWN HAS TO DO, RIGHT?
SHE'S TOUGH
"It'd be nice if there were two moons."
I CAN'T SEE HER AS THE TYPE TO SAY SOMETHING AS FEMININE AS... THAT, THOUGH..
Maybe the fall scene changes people?
But,
Ooh, lemon grass.
Even I know this...
How anxious love makes people.



An incomparable happiness,

And anxiety that keeps you up at night,

Simultaneously,

Over and over again, unending, it gets stronger

That kind of feeling...

WHICH ONE'S YOUR BOY-FRIEND?
HMM... HE LOOKS LIKE SUCH A CITY BOY.
THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE ...
BEEP
Ah, there's a picture attached.
Souta-senpai
Heya! We just got to the ski lodge.
27ak

"HEY, HEY, ICHIHARA-SAN,"
HE WAS AN UPPERCLASS-MAN FROM MY HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS CLUB...
IT WAS PRETTY NORMAL...
NOTHING LIKE THAT...
Click
He didn't even ask.
Looking feminine and me, and
I'll send a picture to him, too
Introduce me to someone, too.
MUST BE AT A SINGLES' MEETING? OR WERE YOU INTRODUCED BY A FRIEND?
HMPH. GOOD FOR YOU. WHERE DID YOU MEET HIM? WHERE DID YOU MEET HIM, HUH?
WELL,

"IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'RE THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF ICHIHARA YUUISEI?"
I'm a big fan, and
Hey! Matsushita Kouta! Go back to the boys court!
Sorry, see you later!
Later ?
Whoops!
AT FIRST, I WASN'T REALLY INTERESTED IN HIM.
A LOT OF PEOPLE COME UP TO ME BECAUSE THEY LIKE THE BOOKS—
"I REALLY LIKE THE SCENE IN THE LAST BOOK OF "THE DAYS OF YORE" SERIES, WHEN JIRO STARTS SNICKERING."
BUT
Shhh
WHICH ONE WAS JIRO?
Um
"IT WASN'T A GIGGLE, OR A CHUCKLE, BUT A SNICKER THAT'S THE KIND OF PERSON JIRO WAS."
HE S SERIOUS
SNICKER
"HEY! THAT'S NOT SOMETHING TO LAUGH ABOUT!"
serious
"AT THAT TIME, HE COULDN'T HELP BUT GIVE THAT SORT OF LAUGH."

And that time, I wasn't good at suppressing my feelings.
The Moon and the Lake
Ichiharu Jason
It got to the point where I couldn't control my feelings anymore.
slide
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
So, even I, know what it's like.
Before I knew it,
I had fallen for him.

OH... SORRY, THAT WAS RUDE OF ME...!
...IT'S OK.
THAT BOOK... YOU HAVEN'T READ IT, RIGHT?
Shige-chan told me.
IF YOU WANT TO READ IT, I'LL LEND IT TO YOU.
NO... IT'S FINE, I'M SURE.
...BUT.
MY GRAND-FATHER ...
WHY HE LOVED YOU MORE THAN MY GRAND-MOTHER...
IT BOTHERS ME.
...LET ME JUST,
TELL YOU A LITTLE STORY
OUT-SIDE

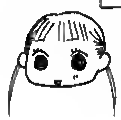
BACK THEN, I HAD JUST STARTED LIVING AND WORKING IN A FARM AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN...
ONE DAY, I WAS DELIVERING VEGETABLES TO HIS VACATION HOUSE
"THE VEGETABLES FROM YOUR PLACE ARE PRETTY BAD."
RIGHT OVER THERE BY THE MOUNTAIN,
OVER ON THAT SIDE OF THE LAKE,
YOU CAN SEE YOUR GRANDPA'S VACATION HOUSE, RIGHT?
HUH? U
HUH...?
UH, DID SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH THEM?
THE VEGETABLES THAT WERE DELIVERED TWO DAYS AGO HAVE ALREADY ROTTED.
IT'S NOT EVEN SUMMER AND THE ROOT CROPS HAVE GONE BAD IN ONLY TWO DAYS...
ISN'T THAT TOO LOW QUALITY?

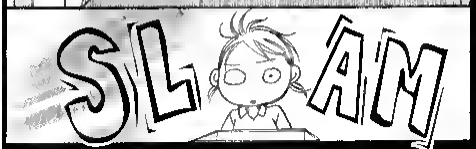
「月と湖」のコト

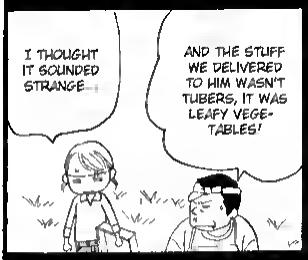
すごーく地味なタイトルなので 表題作にしていいものか迷いましたが かといって「12月の1/2」にも別段ハデさはなく…。なので1個人的に「らしいかな?」と思うこちらを表題に。中身も地味だな。なんだか私は老人ばかり描いてる気がします。

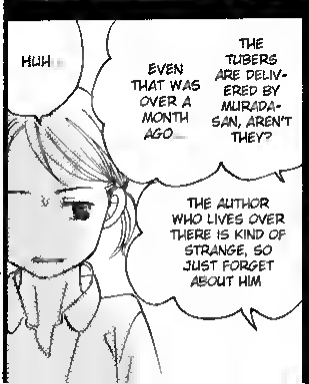
作中登場するメカに おびえる小説家は 別に私がモデルじゃないですよ。本当だよ…!
でもメカ前の電話は こわいです。

一葉









BAM
HE'S DEFINITELY GOING TO TRY TO ARGUE WITH ME AGAIN...
CRUNCH
OH NO. I HAVE TO DELIVER TO THAT GUY AGAIN...
CAW CAW
WHEN THINGS ARE NORMAL, I'M REALLY A DIFFERENT PERSON...
LATELY MY SENSE OF WHAT DAY IT IS OR WHAT TIME IT IS, OR ANYTHING HAS ALL LEFT ME.
AND MY WITS TOO...
I NEVER HAVE ANY FRIENDS...
EVEN MY MEMORY IS GOING.
I'M SORRY...
F... FORGIVE ME!
BOW
SIGH
OH...
IT WAS SO GOOD THAT THE NEXT DAY... I SAUTEED THEM AND ATE THEM ALL!
I WAS WRONG...
I TRIED BOILING THE VEGETABLES THAT YOU DELIEVERED THE OTHER DAY.
THEY WERE DELICIOUS! EXTREMELEY!
Can I go now?
IT WAS MILK THAT WAS DELIVERED TWO DAYS AGO...
RUB RUB
PITIFUL PERSON

YOU SEEM REALLY BUSY, BUT YOU HAVE TO COOK FOR YOURSELF?
YOU SHOULD GET SOME HELP OR SOMETHING
YEAH, BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO GET ALONG WITH ANYONE
ON TOP OF THAT, MY EDITOR IS GOING TO GET IMPATIENT AND COME OVER HERE—
I DON'T WANT THAT. I'M SURE THAT I WANT TO AVOID IT. I REALLY WANT TO STOP IT FROM HAPPENING!
IT'S BAD ...! BAD FOR MY HEART!
I CAN FEEL IT! ALONG MY BACK!
I CAN'T STOP IT...!
IF I WERE DONE,
OF COURSE I'D CALL HIM TO TELL HIM...!
I have no idea
RIGHT?!
GASP
RIGHT NOW— IS MY PHONE RINGING—?
huff huff
IT'S NOT RINGING.
THAT TIME, I ACTUALLY THOUGHT ....
"I DEFINITELY DO NOT WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS PERSON."
Sigh...
If it weren't for my job...

Silen
ce
He's not coming out
I WONDER IF HE FLEW OFF AGAIN.

AND THOSE TIMES WE DIDN'T SAY MUCH TO EACH OTHER
BUT FORTUNATELY, HE WAS BUSY WITH HIS WRITING AND HE DIDN'T COME OUTSIDE.
EVEN IF HE DID COME OUT, IT'D ONLY BE FOR A SECOND.
DING
DONG

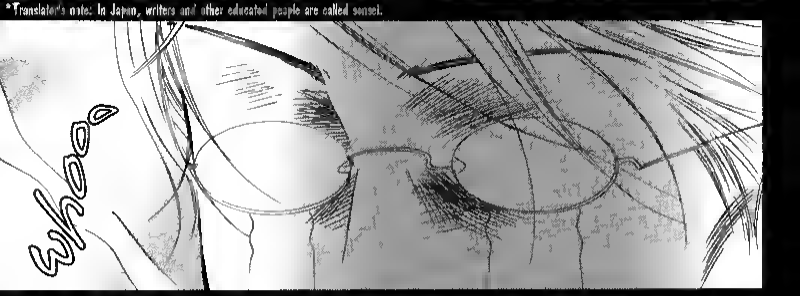
HE'S CRAFTY
IT'S KINDA CUTE
But what a terrible picture.
Heh heh

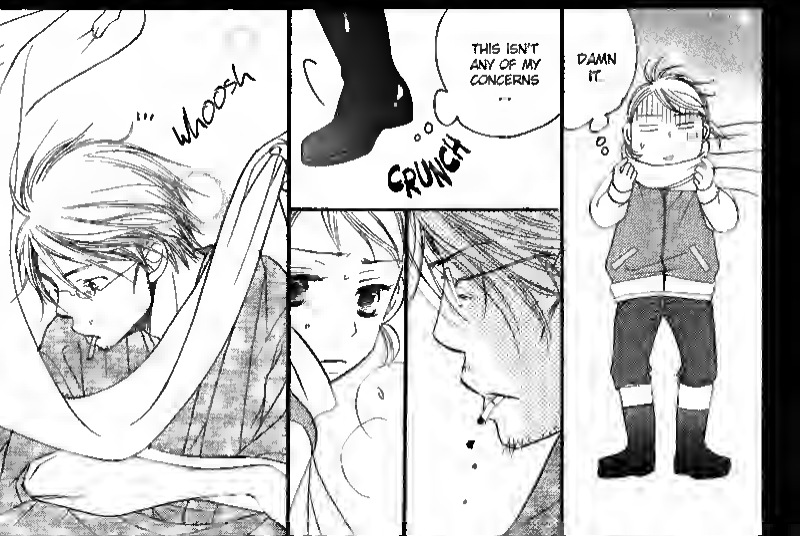
hoooooo
Blur
Blur

To the delivery person
They're good Thanks again
Yusei
HEH

I'LL JUST LEAVE THE VEGETABLES HERE.
To the delivery person
To the delivery

*Translator's note: In Japan, writers and other educated people are called sensei.





I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO COME OUTSIDE, AT LEAST PUT SOME MORE CLOTHES ON.
YOU ARE GOING TO CATCH A COLD
WHY DON'T YOU JUST QUIT?
flap flap flap
IF IT'S SO HARD FOR YOU,
BUT THAT MOON WHICH WE COULD NEVER TOUCH,
IS THE THING THAT I WANT TO GET MY HANDS ON NO MATTER WHAT.
Kiddfrog
...YEAH.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT...

"WHEN A MOON SO HUGE RISES,"
"A SHIP SETS SAIL."
HUH...
"THE WAVES WOULD RUN AGAINST ITS HULL."
"AND THERE WOULD BE ONLY A BIT OF WIND."
QUIETLY, LEAVE SOMETHING IN THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE.
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ANYTHING BIG.
I WANT TO... LEAVE SOME LEGACY BEHIND...
YOU DON'T KNOW? NAKAHARA CHUYA
?
SORRY, I'M UN-EDUCATED, SO...

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SOMETHING THEY CAN HOLD
JUST FOR A MOMENT,
AS LONG AS IT REALLY MOVES THEM.

NAKAHARA CHIUYA?
MURADA BOOKS
I THINK WE HAVE IT. CHECK THAT SHELF OVER THERE
THANKS!
IT'S STRANGE TO SEE YOU INTERESTED IN BOOKS THOUGH, TOUKO-CHAN.
OH! Umm...
Nakahara Yasuo
Sensei's books...!
Umm...
I WASN'T PAID MUCH SO I BOUGHT THEM ONE BY ONE
I WENT THROUGH THEM AS IF I WAS IN A DREAM, LIKE I WAS POSSESSED.
I UNDERSTAND...
THE WAY THAT HANA-CHAN FEELS.
...AH!

MY NEW BOOK? YOU READ IT?
PLEASE DO YOUR BEST! BYE!
dash
flip
Cold Prevention Recipes
1. Lotus Root and Ginger Soup

Thanks for everything
-Yuusei
Thanks for everything
Yuusei

ICHIHARA YUUSEI, ENGAGED
Fiancee, Kinuko-san
I HAD NO IDEA,
THAT HE WAS GOING TO GET MARRIED...
...NOT UNTIL I SAW A PICTURE OF HIM AND HIS FAMILY TOGETHER IN A MAGAZINE
WHAT HAPPENED AFTER-WARDS...
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW, READ THE BOOK
CREAK
SLAM
I WON'T SAY THAT IT WAS IMPOS-SIBLE...

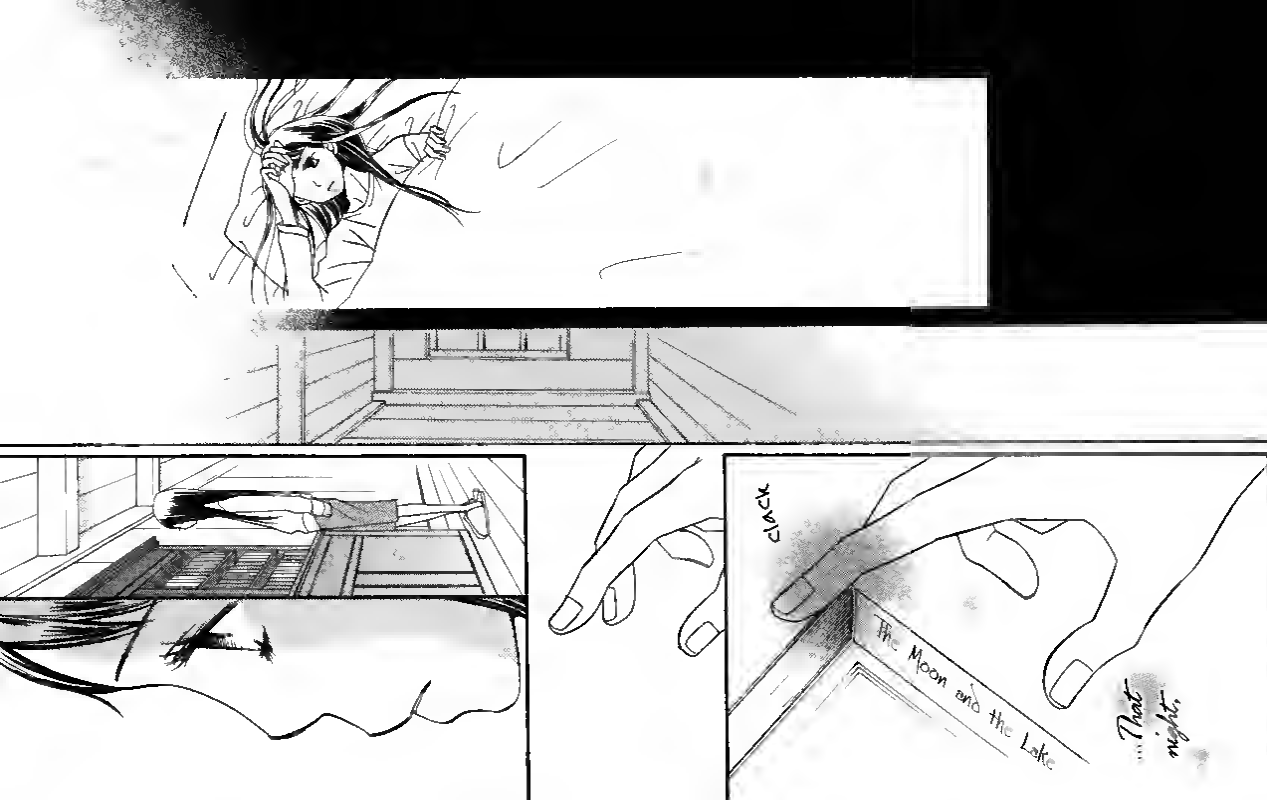
HELLO? KOUTA-SENPAI?
OH! IT'S KAZUNA! KOUTA SENPAI, HERE, TAKE THE PHONE!
HEY! STOP IT, YOU GUYS!
Heh
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE HAVING FUN
IT'S DEFINITELY WORTH THE PRICE. THE HOTEL IS BEAUTIFUL,
AND THE SNOW'S BEEN REALLY GREAT
No, next, no, next
Let go of me!
NEXT TIME WE SHOULD COME HERE TOGETHER
YEAH

"THE HERO OF A SHOUJO MANGA..."
"... IS THE COUPLE."
Bersucomi 10
Bersucomi
AFTER ALL, MEN CAN'T POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND WOMEN...!
?
FURTHER MORE...!
WHETHER OR NOT THERE COULD BE ROMANCE ...!
WHAT...?
MEN CAN'T ALWAYS JUST SENSE WHAT GIRLS ARE FEELING IN THOSE SITUATIONS.

I'M TIRED OF HEARING GRANDPA'S STORIES...
WHAT WAS THAT SIGH?!
BAM
ON THAT MATTER,
ICHIHARA YUUISE! COULDN'T BE MORE RIGHT!
Read this book!
KOUTA-KUN SEEMS TO BE INTERESTED IN YOU, ICHIHARA-SAN
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK
IT'S GOTTA BE ?
KOUTA-SENPAI ONLY CARES ABOUT MY GRANDFATHER'S BOOKS. HE DOESN'T LIKE ME
THE OTHER DAY I ENDED UP WALKING HOME WITH HIM AFTER SCHOOL...
AND ALL HE WOULD TALK ABOUT WAS MY GRANDPA...!
He's completely different from me...
AND HE JUST COOLY TALKS ABOUT CELEBRITIES AND STUFF...
HE STILL HASN'T ASKED ME FOR MY NUMBER...

...I HAVE NO CONFI-DENCE...
WELL, BOTH GUYS AND GIRLS HAVE THAT SAME PROBLEM, DON'T THEY?
"I WONDER WHAT KIND OF PERSON ICHIHARA LIKES."
...THAT'S WHAT HE'S THINKING.

"FUMI-SENPAI!"
"I ASKED KOUTA-SENPAI OUT!"
"HE SAID OK!"
Thank you
Senpai-
Don't cry


clack
The Moon and the Lake
That night.

After the man,
and his wife had just had their marriage ceremony,
Was how it was supposed to be.
Loving his wife with all of his heart,
Till death do they
The man fell in love with another woman...
...PSHH.
Grandpa's a liar
THIS IS PRETTY DIFFERENT FROM THE STORY THAT MIZUBASHI WOMAN TOLD ME...
The woman's character and the way they met has been depicted pretty dramatically, too.
For the first time,
The story begins.
I opened the cover of "The Moon and the Lake."

But.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A MEMOIR, BUT IT'S JUST A NOVEL.
Not surprising.
flip
It's like a dream, or an illusion.
"It'd be nice if there were true moons."
The man's feelings gradually shifted from his wife to the woman
I don't want to put it down.
It's realistic and raw.
It's honest.
flip

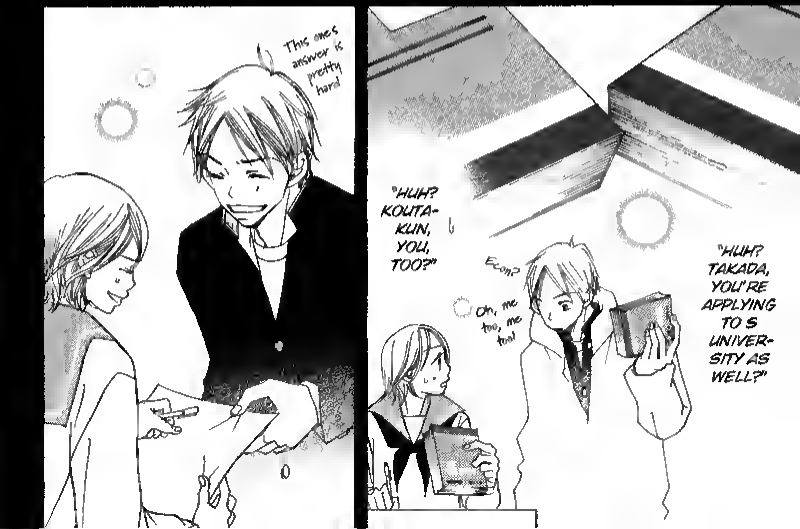
I DIDN'T FIND IT INTEREST-ING
tweet tweet
LAST NIGHT,
I READ THROUGH THAT BOOK
...NEVER
KAZUNA-CHA—
—IS THAT SO?
AS I EXPECTED, I SHOULDN'T HAVE READ IT.

I didn't want to admit it
I'M SORRY.

ONE YEAR AGO,
Kouta-senpai
ding ding
I THOUGHT HIS FEELINGS WERE GETTING WEAKER.
A LITTLE BIT AFTER HE MOVED AWAY TO GO TO COLLEGE...
MY GRANDMA AND I WERE TRICKED..
SO I UNREASONABLY FELT JEALOUS OF YOU.
ding ding
pat
I ASKED HIM, "HAVE YOU FALLEN IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER GIRL?"
HE LAUGHED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD, BUT...

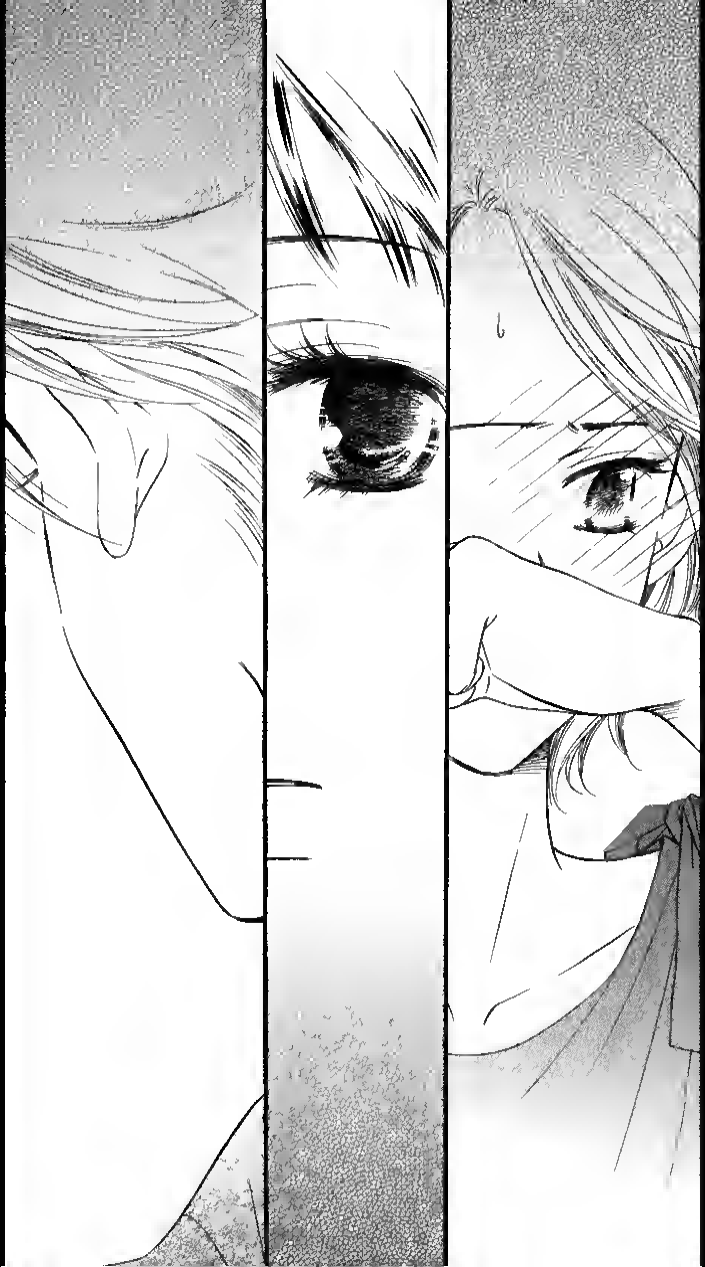
"ARE YOU OK?"
DO YOU FEEL ALRIGHT? STOMACH ACHE?
YOU'RE A FIRST YEAR, RIGHT?
Fuwa... I'm sick...
DO YOU WANT ME TO CALL THE NURSE FOR YOU?
NO... IT'S JUST A MENSTRUAL CRAMP...
Ouch
CAN YOU WALK? I'LL GO GET SOME PILLS FOR YOU.
NURSE'S OFFICE
OH REALLY? YOU WERE IN THE TENNIS CLUB IN MIDDLE SCHOOL ICHIHARA-SAN?
"I'M IN THE TENNIS CLUB HERE IF YOU WANT, YOU SHOULD JOIN, TOO!"
Nice to meet you!
"I'M TAKADA FUMI, A SECOND YEAR!"

"FUMI'S LIKED KOUTA SINCE SHE WAS A FIRST YEAR, HASN'T SHE?"
"THAT'S NO GOOD."
ON THE OTHER HAND,
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT FUMI-SENPAI WAS FEELING AT ALL
"WHAT? KOUTA'S BEEN HANGING AROUND ICHIHARA-SAN?!"
Jeez, what does that girl think she's doing?
Come Kouta's so dense.
FUMI-SENPAI IS A REALLY GOOD PERSON.
SHE WAS ALWAYS LAUGHING
AND SHE REALLY UNDERSTANDS WHAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE THINKING ABOUT.


This one's answer is pretty hard
"HUH? KOUTA-KUN, YOU, TOO?"
Econ?
Oh, me too, me too!
"HUH? TAKADA, YOU'RE APPLYING TO S UNIVERSITY AS WELL?"

AND I STARTED TO FEEL IMPATIENT
I MEAN... SINCE SHE WAS NEAREST HIM, HE'D DEFINITELY REALIZE HOW GREAT FUMI-SENPAI WAS
THE TWO WERE GOING TO GO OFF TO THE SAME COLLEGE.
NATURALLY THEY'D BE SPENDING A LOT MORE TIME TOGETHER.
SO I THOUGHT I SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO GET INTO THE SAME SCHOOL...
I STARTED STUDYING FRANTICALLY.
BUT I WAS RUNNING OUT OF TIME TO GET THAT DONE...
CAFETERIA
REALLY? KOUTA-KUN HAS A GIRLFRIEND?
I had no idea
"WHAT? KOUTA'S GIRLFRIEND?"
SHE SAYS NEXT YEAR SHE'S GOING TO APPLY HERE
SHE'S HAVING AN OVERNIGHT VISIT
Ohh, she's cute
YOU'RE YOUNGER THAN KOUTA-KUN? THEN YOU MUST KNOW FUMI-CHAN TOO
YES
WE WERE ALL IN THE TENNIS CLUB TOGETHER.
KAZUNA-CHAN, IF YOU PASS THE EXAM, YOU SHOULD JOIN OUR CLUB HERE.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE'S FUMI-CHAN TODAY?

I TOTALLY THOUGHT,
THAT YOU WERE GOING OUT WITH FUMI-CHAN.
SPURT
HE CALLS HER FUMI INSTEAD OF TAKADA NOW...
Well, it doesn't really matter.
YEAH, WELL I WAS REALLY SURPRISED.
She'll be here soon
YEAH, FUMI WENT TO RUN AN ERRAND OR SOMETHING.
I said it wasn't like that.
Aren't you overreacting?
HA HA HA!
JAB
suspicious



THE CALM RELIEF...

I HAD BEEN HOLDING ONTO...

LEFT ME.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, KAZUNA.
THE ANSWER TO THAT PROBLEM IS WRONG.
Ah!
IF KOUTA-SENPAI WASN'T GOING TO SAY ANYTHING,
THEN I THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST JUST TO IGNORE IT.
IF HE WAS BY MY SIDE THEN THAT WAS OK.
THE FEELINGS WERE ENOUGH.

"If there were two moons."
"It'd be nice..."
BUT,
I WAS...
STILL JEALOUS OF YOU...
...YOU AND FUMI-SENPAI.
I WAS JEALOUS FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

"THAT MOON WHICH COULD NEVER BE CAP-TURED,"
"IT MAKES ME WANT TO TRY TO CAP-TURE IT EVEN MORE."
I WANTED TO MAKE HIM MINE, BUT I NEVER GOT HIM.
I NEVER ONCE REALLY FELT THAT.
..HE WAS REALLY MINE.
"EVEN IF IT WASN'T REAL."
"EVEN IF IT WASN'T TANGIBLE."
ME, TOO.

DOESN'T...
...EVERYONE HAVE THOSE KINDS OF PROBLEMS?
Every drop of water in my body...
...was wrung out as I cried until sunrise.

AHHH...
OHHH..
HERE I WANT YOU TO TAKE THESE FRESH PICKED HERBS BACK WITH YOU
KAZUNA-CHAN, KAZUNA-CHAN!
Y-You're so mean Shige-san
AN AMAZING FACE YOU'VE GOTTEN UGLY, KAZUNA-CHAN
I FEEL A LOT BETTER AFTER CRYING SO MUCH
Heh heh
I'M GLAD THAT I CAME TO THIS PLACE
It smells good
IT'S MINT..
AND LEMON-GRASS.
If you put it in your tea it'll help you relax

...HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO MEET...
...YOUR GRAND-MOTHER.
I...
THAT'S MY LINE.
BUT NOW THAT I'VE MET YOU,
I'M SORRY
I CAN FINALLY PUT ASIDE THAT DESIRE TO MEET HER
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THE ONE WHO WAS IN THE WRONG WAS MY GRANDPA WHO COULDN'T MAKE UP HIS MIND
WHY DO MEN HAVE AFFAIRS?
Dunno
DON'T ASK ME I HAVEN'T HAD A GIRL-FRIEND IN A LONG TIME
IN THE END,
HMMM
I guess it depends on the person
That's why Kazuna-chan
Introduce me to your friends, too

HUH?
I MEAN, GRANNY HAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT CHARACTER
I DON'T THINK I TOTALLY BELIEVE THAT BOOK
HONK
BUT YOU KNOW,
BUT YOU KNOW, THAT EASY-GOING, OLD WOMAN,
DO YOU THINK SHE WOULD KNOWINGLY GET INVOLVED WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S HUSBAND JUST BECAUSE OF LOVE?
SO THEN...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S CALLED A MEMOIR, OBVIOUSLY IT'S GOING TO BE EXAGGERATED, MORE LIKE A NOVEL...
"MAYBE IN REALITY,"
"SHE NEVER HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT MAN."
BUT THE WAY SHE IS NOW, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKELY.
I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S CHANGED SINCE THEN,
BECAUSE A WHILE AGO,
I HEARD SOMEONE SAY...

THEY SAID, "IT'S A NOVEL; OF COURSE IT'S NOT ALL TRUE."
WOULD MRS. MIZUBASHI REALLY JUST...?
ON THE CONTRARY,
SHE DIDN'T REALIZE HIS FEELINGS UNTIL SHE READ THAT BOOK.
AND THE TRUTH WAS...
AFTER THEY MET EACH OTHER,
SHE NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

DO YOU BELIEVE IT?
...WELL THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.
HE DIDN'T PUBLISH IT WHILE HE WAS ALIVE BECAUSE IT'D BE CRUEL.
BUT HE COULDN'T THROW IT AWAY BECAUSE OF HIS WRITER'S PRIDE,
OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
MRS. MIZUBASHI... SHE NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.
SHE WAS PROBABLY PLANNING TO TELL THE WHOLE THING TO YOUR GRANDMOTHER,
BUT SHE COULDN'T GET HER TO LISTEN.
ANYWAY, THAT LAST BIT IS TRUE.
EITHER WAY, YOUR GRANDPA'S FEELINGS WERE COMPLETELY DIRECTED TOWARD MRS. MIZUBASHI.
...THAT MUCH WE KNOW FROM THE BOOK.

IF THEY HAD REALLY LIED AND CALLED IT A MEMOIR JUST TO HELP IT SELL BETTER,
I TOLD GRANNY SHE SHOULD SUE THEM FOR LIBEL— BUT, SHE DIDN'T THINK LIKE THAT.
"BUT,"
"I'M HAPPY IT'S THIS WAY."
"I..."
"—REALLY, REALLY LIKE HIS STORY."
"IT WAS A WELL-CRAFTED LIE."
"THIS STORY..."
"...IS JUST..."
"...BEAUTI-FUL."

Grandma,
WHAT A LUCKY GUY HE WAS,
YOUR GRANDPA.
Ahh... I wish I was that way...
Mrs. Mizuhashi is a really, wonder-ful lady.
But...
WOW.
HERBS!
Hmm, they smell good ♥

GRAND-MA...
DID YOU... ACTUALLY WANT TO GO VISIT MRS. MIZUBASHI BY YOURSELF?
I THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER
Even though I did have fun there
AS THE LEGITIMATE WIFE, I STILL HAVE MY PRIDE!
OH...
...MRS MIZUBASHI.
WAS SHE ANGRY THAT BOOK HAD BEEN PUBLISHED WITHOUT HER CONSENT?
SHE WASN'T ANGRY.
"I REALLY LIKE THAT BOOK," SHE SAID.
...I SEE
That's good
THAT WAS WHAT... HAD BEEN BOTHERING ME ALL THIS TIME...

I GUESS,
I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND
MRS. MIZUBASHI
IS A REALLY WONDERFUL LADY.
BUT I THINK MY GRANDMA IS WONDERFUL, TOO.
THAT MAN,
I WONDER WHAT HE THOUGHT YOU WERE MISSING?
HE LEFT BEHIND THAT NOVEL FOR YOU TO SEE.
BUT DO YOU THINK IT WAS A GOOD THING THAT HE STAYED WITH YOU?
THAT'S TRUE.
RIGHT AFTER I READ THAT BOOK,
I WAS SHOCKED— I COULDN'T HELP BEING SAD.

I GUESS I WAS SAD
WOMEN CAN'T HELP FALLING FOR THOSE TYPES OF MEN.
...THAT SORT OF THING.
TOWARD A DREAM, OR AN AMBITION...
OR LOVE ...
Wedding Day
BUT,
I KNEW I WAS MARRYING A PERSON WHO WAS A WRITER AT HEART.
AFTER ALL, HE WAS A MAN
HE'D TELL ME HE LOVED ME WHILE HE WAS IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN
ACTUALLY,
I HAD A FEELING THAT HE WAS ALWAYS THINKING OF SOME PLACE FAR AWAY

BUT THAT'S ...
A WOMAN'S ROMANTIC NATURE, ISN'T IT?
Right?
I'm sure...
...what made the difference was just fate and compatability, and a bit of timing.

IF I DON'T GO RIGHT NOW, I'LL LOSE COURAGE.
TO YOUR BOYFRIEND'S PLACE? JEEZ, IT'S SO LATE, CAN'T YOU WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW?
Is she just a sore loser?
Maybe not
BUT PART OF IT WAS YOUR FAULT, GRANDMA
?
"I ONLY LOVE YOU, YOU ARE MY EVERYTHING!"
HE'D HAVE TO IGNORE ALL OTHER GIRLS
"INFIDELITY?! WHAT LANGUAGE'S THAT?!"
"YOU AND I ARE BOUND BY FATE...!"
IF IT WERE ME I DEFINITELY WOULDN'T MARRY A MAN LIKE GRANDPA
I'D RATHER HAVE A MAN WHO ONLY HAD EYES FOR ME!
WHAT?U
YOU'RE GOING OUT AT THIS HOUR?

YOU... YOU'RE DEFINITELY NEVER GETTING MARRIED...
Um
Especially if you call him stupid
IS WHAT THAT STUPID MAN WOULD SAY...!
YOUR CUTE GRANDDAUGHTER...
ISN'T VERY FOND OF YOU ANYMORE.
SLAM
OK!
I'M GOING!

He was kind and a little indecisive.
SERVES YOU RIGHT!
But I loved him, from the bottom of my heart.
HELLO? KOUTA-SENPAI?
YEAH, I'VE COME BACK
CAN I SEE YOU RIGHT NOW?
YEAH.
I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU.
This time,
I'll push myself forward.

"The Moon and the Lake" *end* Published in Betsucomi, April 2007 issue

The Moon and the Lake

by Ashihara Hinako

Brought to you by Dragon Voice (http://dragonvoice.org)

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Editor: oushi

QChecker: manganniverse

Nora in December

Trans note: Nora means stray (cats and dogs).

Nora in December

December, ten years ago
...Nacchan's house next door burned down.
WAH! GONG GONG
EEK!
WAH!
IT'S DANGEROUS! STAY BACK!
NACCHAN
Both parents were safe.
Only Nacchan was never found.
SAE! IT'S DANGEROUS! DON'T GO NEAR THE FIRE!
BUT...
THE WOMAN IS SAFE! WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH THE HUSBAND, TOO!
WHAT ABOUT NACCHAN?

GIRL MISSING
The body was never found...
FROM A FIR
...in the chaos of the fire.
Only Nacchan ...
...disappeared.

Nacchan's family moved in next door six months before the fire.
NEXT DOOR
IS PRETTY IMPRESSIVE.
IT'S LIKE A HOUSE MADE OF SWEETS
WHITE AND PINK
De-coration cake!
IT'S BRIGHT
WHAT KIND OF FAMILY WOULD BE MOVING THERE?
Makes me a bit nervous
WE ARE WATABES WE JUST MOVED IN NEXT DOOR
THIS IS MY DAUGHTER NATSUKI.
The residents of the house of sweets didn't disappoint.
HEY, SAE!
Who?!
frilly!

EH?
SWOOSH
I CAN HAVE IT? REALLY?
NOD
WHOA!
THANK YOU SO MUCH!
JUMP
STICK
RIBBIT
NATSUKI!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
EEEK!
THANK YOU!
H's cute!

...really liked Nacchan.
I...
I'm so sorry, so sorry.
THESE ARE ALL YOUR CLOTHES?
IT'S GREAT! GREAT! YOU ARE LIKE A PRINCESS!
Um hum.
UWA!
U...

IS YOUR FAMILY REALLY RICH?
Like celebrity?
NO
CELEBRITIES DON'T NEED TO GET A 35-YEAR LOAN TO BUY A HOUSE
Princess!
PLUS THEY SPENT SO MUCH ON THE EXTERIOR THAT THE INSIDE IS ALL FLIMSY
OK
You know a lot of difficult words
SLAM
It's paper thin!
ARE THESE CLOTHES YOUR MOM'S TASTE?
SHE USES HER SAVINGS TO BUY THESE
IN HER MIND.
...THERE IS AN IDEAL IMAGE OF HAPPINESS.
Ho ho ho ho!
DRESSING UP INSIDE OF A CUTE HOUSE, WITH A DAUGHTER WEARING AN APRON DRESS.
SPENDING ALL DAY BAKING CAKES... YOU KNOW, A LITTLE GIRL'S DREAM.
It's all over her head.
I'M JUST ONE CHARACTER IN HER DREAM WORLD.
YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL, TOO
IF YOU UPSET HER, SHE WILL ERASE YOUR EXISTENCE.
JUST LIKE MY DAD.

Tada
GO AHEAD! DIG IN.
clunk
THANK YOU.
You don't have to be so nervous
I'M SO SORRY!
?
Please don't curse me!
KNEEL
CLACK
Eek!
"SHE WILL ERASE YOUR EXISTENCE."
clatter
AH!
IT'S LIKE BIRTHDAY AND CHRISTMAS WRAPPED IN ONE!
BUT IN WHICH HAND DO I HOLD A KNIFE...?

PUSH
HELLO.
WHERE WERE YOU?
CONVE-NIENCE STORE
You've home
DAD!
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME?
NO THANKS
I SEE
CHAK

"SHE WILL ERASE YOUR EXISTENCE."
To me...
NACCHAN, THE DRESS FOR YOUR NEXT PIANO RECITAL...
DON'T YOU FEEL STIFLED?
This is a bit too much.
She borrowed this
I DO.
OF COURSE.
...more than her Dad,
Nacchan seemed to be much more stifled.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH,
I DON'T REALLY LIKE CAKES
I want potato chips
I HATE THESE FRILLY OUTFITS, TOO.
NACCHAN ...

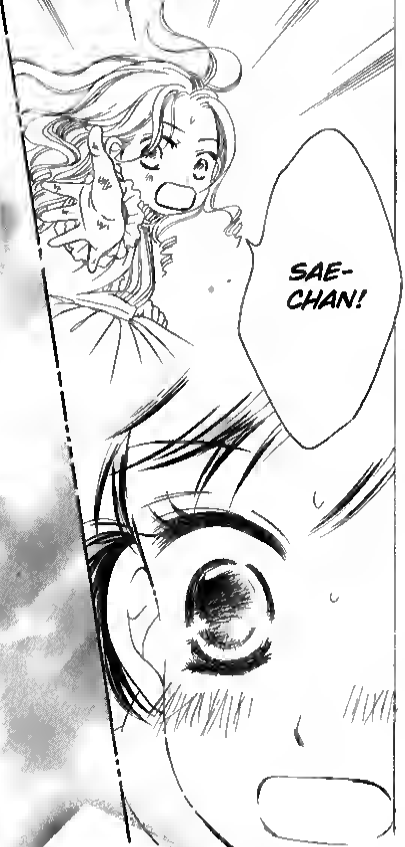
MY MOM...
SO...
DAD YELLED AT MOM, AND THEY ENDED UP IN A BIG FIGHT
Bloody stuff!
WHEN I TOLD HER THAT BEFORE,
NOT JUST ONE CHARACTER IN A STORY
...SHE SAYS EVERY CHILD IS A LEADING CHARACTER IN HER STORY
Let's do Nora's Adventure!!
Is that a popular game?
?
clinch
EXCITED
EXCITED
NACCHAN...
...WHY DON'T YOU SNEAK OUT AT THREE TOMORROW?

CLACK
peek peek
Tick
NACCHAN
OVER HERE!
TMP
DOES SHE KNOW?
WHOA∪!
trip
IT'S OK!
MY MOM HAS GONE SHOPPING, SHE WON'T BE BACK FOR AT LEAST THREE HOURS

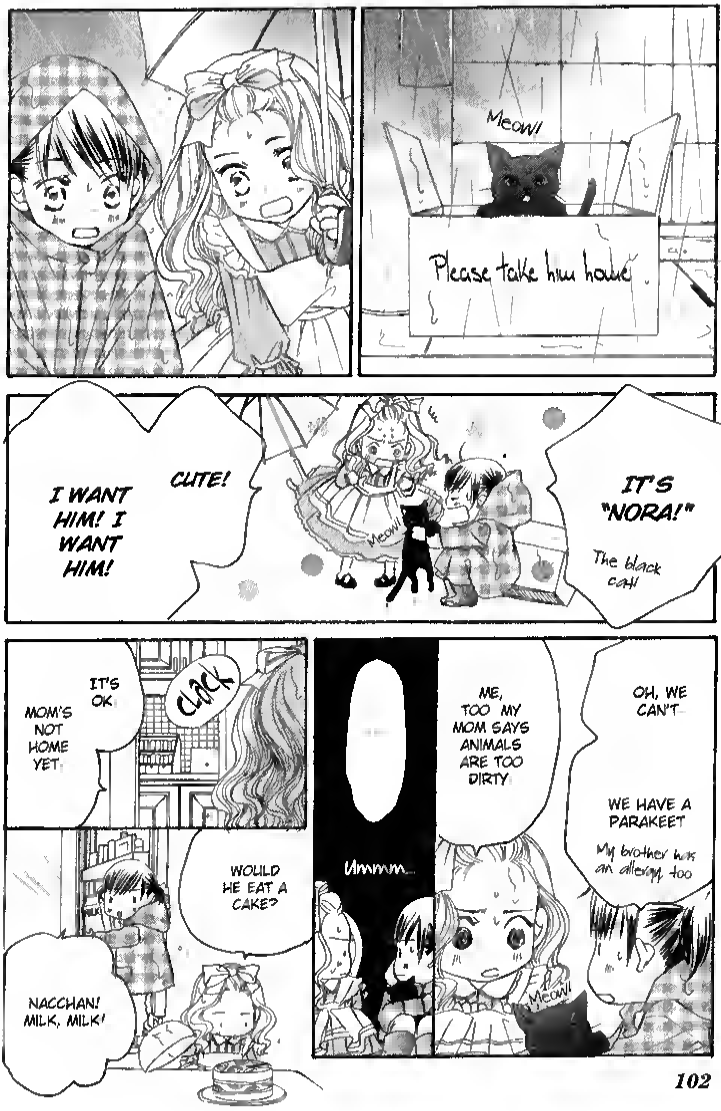
Huh.
Yeah, yeah.
YUP!
MY FAVORITE PICTURE BOOK.
THIS IS THE "NORA'S ADVENTURE?"
AN ADVENTURE...
HE RIDES TRAINS AND BUSES...
...AND HEADS OUT ON AN ADVENTUROUS TRIP TO AN UNKNOWN TOWN.
A BLACK CAT RUNS AWAY FROM A STIFLING HOME.
go through a construction yard...
...to an unknown city.
Turn the corner.
SOUNDS GREAT.
Knight?

GYAHAHA!
WHAT THE—? WHY ARE YOU WEARING SUCH A WEIRD OUTFIT?!
THE BULLIES!
What are you on about?
PISSED
SLAM
DON'T LEAVE DOG WASTE!
stare
NACCHAN ...!
I'LL HANDLE THIS!
RAN!
Fight off the enemies.
GAH!
SWOOSH SWOOSH SWOOSH
YOU—
Hey!
STOP!
UGH!

Run with you...

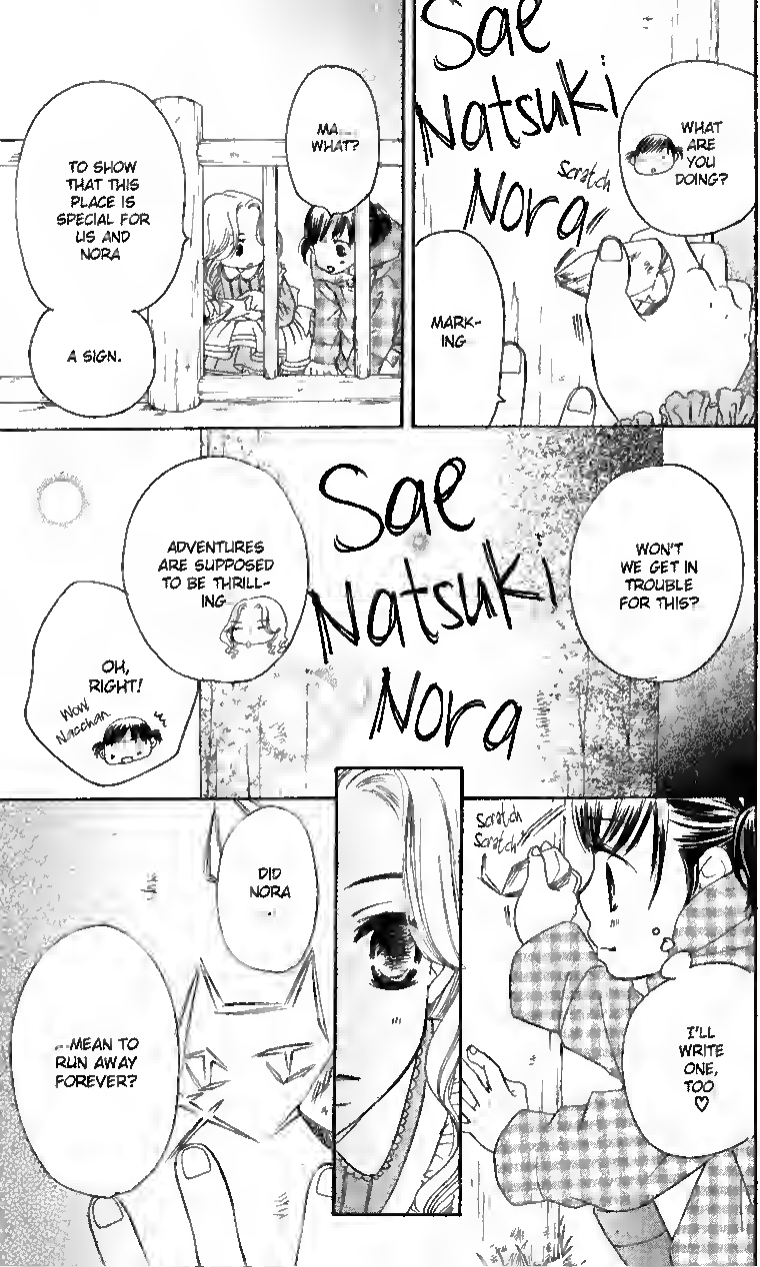


...into the light.


Meow!
Please take him home.
I WANT HIM! I WANT HIM!
CUTE!
Meow!
IT'S "NORA!"
The black cat!
IT'S OK.
MOM'S NOT HOME YET.
CLICK
WOULD HE EAT A CAKE?
NACCHAN! MILK, MILK!
Ummm...
ME, TOO MY MOM SAYS ANIMALS ARE TOO DIRTY.
OH, WE CAN'T.
WE HAVE A PARAKEET
My brother was an allergy too
Meow!

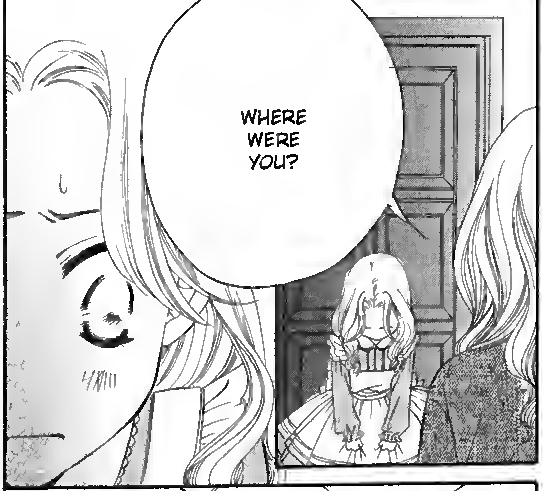
Meow!
SAE-CHAN!
OVER THERE!
...
He ran away!
Please take him home
OH.
He's gone.

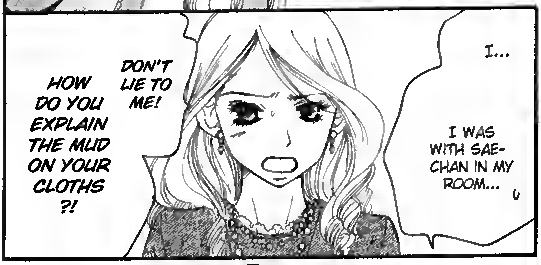
I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME ...
NACCHAN DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
NOTHING SPECIAL
MEOW!
PULL
ring
ring
SWISH


Sae Natsuki
Scratch Nora
MA... WHAT?
TO SHOW THAT THIS PLACE IS SPECIAL FOR US AND NORA
A SIGN.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
MARK-ING
Sae Natsuki
Nora
ADVENTURES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THRILL-ING
OH, RIGHT!
Woo Nacchan
WON'T WE GET IN TROUBLE FOR THIS?
DID NORA
...MEAN TO RUN AWAY FOREVER?
Scratch Scratch
I'LL WRITE ONE, TOO ♡

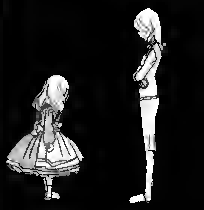
TAKE THE TRAIN,
TRAVEL THROUGH MANY CITIES.
THEN WHAT?
WHAT?
...
SHE MEANS THE BOOK.
OH
IS THERE ...
...NOWHERE TO GO BACK TO?
THE END.
HUH?
AND NORA CONTINUED HIS ADVENTURE IN A NEW CITY
The end

bRoom bRoom
Jerk
HEY, MOM.
IF YOU DON'T TREAT YOUR BOOKS WELL, YOU'LL GROW UP AN IDIOT.
AH, Sorry
THAT'S NOT THE END!
You said "continued!"
SLAM
Which is it?
HEY!
bRoom
...WOULD YOU BE SAD?
IF I DISAP-PEARED
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?! YOU WANT TO RUN AWAY?!
OF COURSE I WOULD BE! YOU KNOW THAT!
I won't run away.
because I said would grow up an idiot?
SA..
I LOVE YOU, DAD, AND MA-KUN (BROTHER), AND PICHAN (PARAKEET)
NO NOT AT ALL
What was that all about?!
"DAD YELLED AT MOM, AND THEY ENDED UP IN A BIG FIGHT. ."
"SO..."
Nacchan, too...





I love Dad and Mom, but...



NATSUKI!
I...
...DON'T WANT TO DRESS LIKE THIS ANY-MORE!
...
I'VE HAD IT!
I DON'T WANT THIS!
flinch
Meow!
I WONDER IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO HER...
NACCHAN ...
...DOESN'T SEEM TO BE COMING TODAY.
Nora
Meow!

KLACK KLACK KLACK
YA YA YA!
YA!
Swish Swish
rattle
AH!
CLACK
NACCHAN!
YOU COULDN'T LEAVE YOUR—?
OH, GOOD I WAS SO WORRIED
WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?

snap
I'M SORRY.
SOB
I'M NOT TRYING TO BE MEAN.
sniffle
I THOUGHT YOU WERE OVER AT HER HOUSE.
YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT OK. I'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES THAT YOU CAN'T LEAVE THE HOUSE WITHOUT AN ADULT
TODAY,
I WAS SHOCKED WHEN I HEARD FROM NACCHAN'S MOM
WHEN TWO LITTLE GIRLS GO OUT ALONE.
YOU COULD GET KIDNAPPED. CAN IMAGINE HOW SCARY THAT IS?
YOU COULD GET LOST OR GET IN AN ACCIDENT

...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PLAY WITH NACCHAN AGAIN.
WHEN YOU GO TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEXT YEAR
IT'S OK.
YES.
CAN YOU PROMISE ME THAT?
YOU WON'T EVER GO OUT WITHOUT PERMISSION.
SAE!
...for the next three months,
Nacchan's mom...
...didn't let me see Nacchan even once.
OK!
LET'S GO FOR A WALK.
HER MOM, TOO...
... WILL FORGIVE YOU SOON.
That's what my Mom said but...

CAN'T I MEET NORA SOON?
"RUSTLE"
NO!
"RUSTLE"
NO ONE'S ALLOWED TO GO THERE EXCEPT ME, NACCHAN, AND NORA.
WHILE NACCHAN CAN'T COME,
I HAVE TO KEEP IT SAFE
YOU WAIT THERE!
DON'T GO TOO FAR.
I KNOW!
I want to go with her
KIDS HAVE THEIR OWN RULES...
I'm worried but
Bww!
Huff

FRIED CHICKEN
CURRY UDON NOODLE
CURRY NOODLE ?!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER?
UMMM
mumble mumble
I would rather make something fancier
Christmas Books with Mommy
Santa is coming to town
Peter's Christmas
Vera in December
WOW. LOTS OF BOOKS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

"TAKE THE TRAIN, TRAVEL THROUGH MANY CITIES, THEN WHAT?"
A SEQUEL?
IT'S WHAT HAPPENS TO NORA AFTERWARDS?
YOU KNOW, I BOUGHT YOU A BOOK CALLED "THE BIG ADVENTURE OF NORA."
THIS IS THE SEQUEL.
OH, IT'S A NORA'S ADVENTURE SERIES.
HUH?
A new one.
DO YOU WANT IT?
Yes!♡
I WANT TO READ THIS WITH NACCHAN!
Thank you, Mom!
WHAT...?
TMP.
I'M GOING TO HER HOUSE!
¥100 yen* please.

*Note: Around 16 dollars

whee
whee
whee
squeal
WHOA!
SEE ?!
Don't run!
IT'S NOT SAFE!
SAE!
VROOM
M-MOM! DID YOU TURN OFF THE STOVE?!
OF COURSE I DID!
DASH
I DID! I TOTALLY DID!
AND YOU?! DID YOU UNPLUG THE KOTATSU TABLE?!
whee
Is there a fire?
A FIRE TRUCK . . .?
IT'S GOING TOWARDS OUR HOUSE.
whee
whee

About "Nora in December" -

Actually, I struggled with this script.

-

Ever since I moved, I keep running into stray cats. Even though they keep messing with my garbage bin in my yard, I still find them cute. It makes me want to tell them that I don't have any food in that garbage (it must smell like food.) Although I am a dog lover, I'd like to get a cat again some day.

Nora

I'm not good at drawing animals.

Wah!
PLEASE PUT IT OUT FAST!
OTHER HOUSES WILL CATCH IT!
WA...
SHE MIGHT STILL BE IN THERE
WATABE-SAN
DR
Sakura in December
bUMP
GET BACK! IT'S DAN-GEROUS!
Whoosh

SHE'S ALL RIGHT! I GOT HOLD OF HER HUSBAND, TOO!
WHAT ABOUT NACCHAN ...?
BUT ...
SAE! IT'S DANGEROUS! DON'T GO NEAR THE FIRE!
NACCHAN ...
The fire...
...quickly engulfed her house.
The front side of our house got a little burned, too.
Then, the fire was finally put out.
I WAS SO SHOCKED
I THOUGHT IT WAS OUR HOUSE
YOU WERE FREAKING OUT WHEN YOU PHONED ME...
I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL OVER.
THE FIRE WAS MOVING SO QUICKLY
...at Work
Sigh
IT'S BEEN SO DRY LATELY

HOW ABOUT MRS WATABE..?
AT THE HOSPITAL
SHE WAS LOOKING FOR NACCHAN IN THE FIRE AND GOT BURNED.
SHE'S GOING TO BE OK, RIGHT?
YEAH
BUT NACCHAN...
SHE SAID NACCHAN WAS IN THE ROOM RIGHT BEFORE THE FIRE STARTED.
Not even her body...
...NACCHAN...
THEY CAN'T FIND...
...ANYWHERE.
...was found at the site.
And a few days went by.
Click
SAE.
CAN WE HAVE A MINUTE?
THE POLICEMAN WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.

NACCHAN, DID SHE TELL YOU ANYTHING?
ANY-THING.
LIKE SHE WAS SCARED OR SOMETHING BAD HAP-PENED TO HER
ANYTHING -?
"SHE WILL ERASE YOUR EXISTENCE."
"I HATE THESE FRILLY OUTFITS, TOO."
"I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME."
FRILLY.
SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT TO WEAR FRILLY CLOTHES.
IS THAT IT? ANYTHING ELSE?
SIR.
SHE REALLY DOESN'T KNOW ANY-THING.
THEY HAVEN'T PLAYED TO-GETHER FOR QUITE A WHILE ANYWAY
WHY IS THAT?
WHY?
Umm..
THAT'S

THEY FIGURED OUT THAT THE CAUSE OF FIRE WAS AN ELECTRICAL CARPET, RIGHT?
THERE'S NO SIGN OF A FOUL PLAY, RIGHT?
NO.
I WONDER IF THEY THINK IT'S A KIDNAPPING OR A RUNAWAY CASE
bow
WHERE'S SAE?
COULD YOU BRING HER?
SHE'S IN HER ROOM.
IT'S..
flip
.. MUCH BETTER THAN DYING IN A FIRE
.. AND GOT LOST.
SHE WAS PROBABLY SCARED OF THE FIRE, RAN OUT
LET SAE BELIEVE THAT.
BUT... IT'S BEEN A WEEK.
You are too relaxed.
SAE?
OH.
She's not here

Sae
Natsuki
Nora
tsuka
tsuka
SAE!
NORA!

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO OUT ALONE!
DON'T DO THAT AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED!
NORA'S GONE.
HUH?
I FORGOT TO FEED HIM FOR A LONG TIME...
I LOOKED, BUT I CAN'T FIND HIM...
...ANYWHERE.
NORA'S DISAPPEARED, TOO
MOM...
...WHERE DID NACCHAN GO...?
I...
IS IT BECAUSE I MADE HER MOM ANGRY?
NO!

NACCHAN ...
...IS LIVING SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY WITH NORA.
SHE WAS SURPRISED BY THE FIRE AND RAN AWAY.
THEN SHE WENT TO A FAR AWAY TOWN WITH NORA.
BUT THEY FOUND HER.
AND SHE'S HAPPILY LIVING WITH NORA AND HER PARENTS.
REALLY?
YUP! DEFINITELY!

Naccham...
...her property was sold.
FOR SALE
REALLY.
In the end, without ever finding Nora or Naccham...
...all those potential leads disappeared.
Then,
after a while...
...is probably living with Nora somewhere far away.

SAE-CHAN, HOW OLD ARE YOU?
DON'T END IT LIKE A FAIRY TALE.
I THINK THAT ENDING IS A LITTLE WEAK.
Holes everywhere
Heh Heh!
I'm sixteen.
She ran away from that cake-like house.
Maybe she got rid of those frilly dresses...
...and lived happily ever after with her family.
Oh ho ho ho!
Heh! Heh! Heh!
Fin
Meow!
HEY, YOU. HOLD ON THERE!

BUT THEY DIDN'T FOUND ANY BONES OR ANYTHING...
WHAT? THEN WOULDN'T IT BE MORE NATURAL TO HAVE DIED IN THE FIRE?
THE BONES OF A LITTLE GIRL WOULD BURN UP COMPLETELY, WOULDN'T IT?
That wouldn't be a crime. Mew
NO WAY!
At least teeth or something would be left behind.
I VOTE FOR THE KIDNAPPING.
She fell in love with the kidnapper!
Friendship of preschoolers
MAYBE SHE JUST FORGOT ABOUT YOU.
OR...
MURMUR MURMUR
eeek!
1 - 4
SERIOUSLY, WOULDN'T SHE CONTACT YOU IF SHE WERE ALIVE?
THE GIRL WAS TOTALLY MURDERED!
DIG IT UP! YOU'LL FIND HER BONES!
POINT
THE CULPRIT IS THE MOTHER!
CULPRIT?
AH, THE CAT! THE CAT!
OH, WHY WERE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?
THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH I SHOULDN'T HAVE TOLD YOU THIS STORY... to you guys
cute !!!
Meow!
EEEK!
Meow!
Meow!
smirk
MORIZO'S CAT HAD BABIES.

So cute!
Eeek!
I CAN'T EITHER.
WE HAVE A PARAKEET AND MY BROTHER HAS AN ALLERGY
HOW ABOUT YOU, SAE?
SAME HERE
OH, I CAN'T. OUR CONDO DOESN'T ALLOW PETS
IF YOU THINK SO, PLEASE TAKE THEM
Meow!
Meow!
YOU GUYS! COMPLETELY USELESS!!
WE WERE GONNA HELP YOU FIND SOMEONE, BUT NOT ANYMORE!
Meow!
I'm sorry
PLEASE! WE JUST CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE CATS.
IF I DON'T FIND SOMEONE, I'M WORRIED THAT MY MOM WILL THROW THEM OUT
What? You can't throw them out!
You need to spay her
I won't! But
SO CUTE! ♡
IF MA-KUN WEREN'T ALLERGIC, I'D TOTALLY TAKE HIM
And make him get along with Pichun the parakeet

It's been ten years.
There! I'm going to use it on my screen.
HE LOOKS A BIT LIKE NORA.
FOR SALE
AH.
NACCHAN'S PROPERTY IS FOR SALE AGAIN.
Nacchan is still missing.

YEAH... AND IT'S A PRETTY GOOD LOCATION.
NO ONE SEEMS TO STAY.
I KNOW THERE WILL BE A NEW OWNER
In the last ten years, the owner of the place kept changing.
I WISH SOMEONE WOULD STAY SOON
IT'S NOT SAFE TO HAVE IT UNOCCUPIED
But after six months, he had to work overseas
You said we never had to transfer! That was why we built this place!
Things changed
They built a very, average-looking house there.
First was a young couple who had only been married for two years.
Brother ⇨ (7th grade)
MA-KUN...
What are you talking about?
THAT LAND IS CURSED!
IT'S DEFINITELY ...
...THE CURSE OF NACCHAN.
After that, it was rented, and was up for sale again.
It kept changing owner to this day.

OH, IS THAT WHAT IT IS...?
You think like Morizo
I THINK YOU'RE JUST HEARING SOME STRAY CATS...
They are in heat
I hear dead people!
WE CAN HEAR A CHILD CRYING EVERY NIGHT!
SHE WAS KILLED AND BURIED THERE WITH THE CAT!
BUT THE LADY WHO LIVED THERE WAS A BIT CRAZY, RIGHT?
WELL, I WAS JUST A BABY SO I DON'T REMEMBER..
ALL THE NEIGHBORS ARE SAYING IT.
MASAKI!
Oh, sorry
Hey, did you touch a cat?
HONEY, DINNER.
"IS THERE..."
Oh, grilled meat!
You two!
I don't see your name on it!
Hm?
Hey, you ate my meat!
"...NOWHERE TO GO BACK TO?"

"IT'S DEFINITELY THE CURSE OF NACCHAN."
"THEY DIDN'T FIND ANY BONES."
"WOULDN'T SHE CONTACT YOU IF SHE WERE ALIVE?"
"I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME."
"SHE'LL ERASE YOUR EXISTENCE."
"SHE WAS KILLED..."
"...BY HER MOTHER."
SQUEEZE
"IT'S STIFLING."
"I REALLY HATE IT."
YOU!

It's because Mo-kun said such a weird thing.
sigh
WHAT A DREAM...
GULP
For ten years...
Whoa
...I wanted to know the truth and researched as much as I could.
A GIRL MISSI
But I couldn't find anything concrete.
OM A FIRE
Without any convincing answer...
HEY, IT'S NOT SAFE TO BE UNDER THERE. COME OUT
I want to pet him
HISS
Meow!
AH!
THUMP
DASH
She ran.
OUCH!

Meow!
PING
UGH
for ten years...
"SAE-CHAN."
...I thought...
...one day Nacchan would come back...
That's all I could think of...
TMP
PING
NORA?

NORA!
WAIT!
NORA!
NORA!
SIGH

OH.
JESUS!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
I'M SORRY
A CAT
WHAT?
DID YOU SEE A CAT?!
HUH?
I DIDN'T SEE ANY CAT
ARE YOU OK?
EH?
I DIDN'T SEE ONE.
YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO JUMPED OUT
EH?

ARE YOU OK?
YOU MEAN MY HEAD?
NO, YOUR LEG IT'S BLEEDING
OH
IT'S FINE IT'S NOTHING
Sorry I ran in front of you
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A CAT?
BUT ...
YEAH ...
...IT WAS MY MISTAKE
I think
I ONLY KNEW HIM AS A KITTEN
I wouldn't know what she looks like now
MAYBE I HALLUCI-NATED.
AHHAHAHAHA!
HUH.
That bites
WELL ME, TOO
EH?

I'M LOOKING FOR A CAT, TOO.
JUST LIKE YOU.
YOU CAME FROM K CITY?
That's so far away
YEAH.
HE HASN'T COME HOME FOR A MONTH
HE'S PRETTY OLD.
I'M SO WORRIED THAT HE DIED SOMEWHERE...
I'm gonna lose my hair
HUH?
That's tough
I SKIPPED SCHOOL AND LOOKED EVERYWHERE...
OH, THEN I'LL HELP YOU.
I KNOW THE AREA WELL ENOUGH, LIKE WHERE CATS HANG OUT.
YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD PERSON.
Not just a weirdo
...BUT I'M RUNNING OUT OF MONEY, SO I'M A BIT STRESSED.
I think I will start hallucinating too.
REALLY...?
Eh?
Ugh!
Huh?

CAN WE EXCHANGE OUR CELL NUMBERS?
I'll help you find your cat, too.
THEN LET'S TRADE OUR CONTACT INFO.
YUP
Good Save
beep beep
BUT ...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FOR MY CAT
HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR TEN YEARS.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOREVER, BUT HE'S PROBABLY NOT EVEN IN THIS CITY ANYMORE.
WHY?
A BLACK CAT.
HE WENT MISSING WITH MY FRIEND NACCHAN.
HIS NAME WAS NORA.

click
NO, I DON'T
No picture
DO YOU HAVE HIS PICTURE?
Your cat
THEN CAN YOU DRAW HIM?
His characteristics
UMM... I GUESS THIS WOULD WORK
He looks I mean
Tabby
A scar
Red collar
He likes paper bags
A TABBY...
...NAMED TABBY
Mines not that much better
HA HA! THAT'S PREDICTABLE.
YOURS?

"HIROKI TAURA."
THE NAME? Ah, um I mean yours
LET'S GO FIND HIM!
Some-how...
Mine is
"TAURA..."

...I felt like I already knew him.
TALIRA-KUN!
Over here
HEH HEH! ISN'T IT?
IT'S LIKE A CAT PARADISE..
...THIS CITY!
There are a lot of good spots
Meow! Meow!
UGH!
WOW!
Meow!
Click
So cute

Oh, come on.
Mine isn't that close
I ALMOST FORGOT THE MAIN REASON I'M HERE...
so much temptation
Meow!
huff
OH, THERE'S ONE!
NOT TOO MANY TABBIES
EXCUSE ME. WE ARE LOOKING FOR OUR CATS...
Cough

I GUESS IT WON'T BE THAT EASY TO FIND THEM.
WHY DON'T WE GO TO THE NEXT TOWN TOMORROW?
IT'S SUNDAY, SO I CAN GO WITH YOU ALL DAY.
OH, DO YOU HAVE A PLACE TO STAY TONIGHT?
SAE-CHAN ...
AREN'T YOU HUNGRY?
LET'S GO EAT. MY TREAT.
Then,
THEN WE GO DUTCH.
Come on, I said it's my treat.
HI MOM.
I KNOW! I WON'T BREAK THE CURFEW.
YEAH. I'M GONNA GET SOME DINNER WITH MY FRIEND BEFORE I COME HOME
YOU MUST REALLY LIKE HER
Your Mom
WHAT? I DON'T KNOW... WE'RE JUST NORMAL.
beep
The other day she did...

Delete Contact
Hiroki Taura
Would you like to delete this contact?
Yes
No
SORRY.
I HAVE TO USE THE BATHROOM.
OH?

BUT WHY? WAS HE IN A HURRY?
AH.
I COULD CALL HIM
HUH?
TAURA-KUN?
WHAT? DID HE LEAVE?
DID I PUT MY CELL ON THE TABLE?
Eh, why?
I swear I saved his number...
beep
beep
beep
beep beep

Only his number is gone...
SHIT.
I NEED TO CHECK OUT—
I'M SERI-OUSLY OUT OF CASH
slide
I GUESS I HAVE TO GO HOME ONCE
Where the hell is he? Really
OH, MAN
seriously
BEEP
HOTEL

YESTERDAY,
DID YOU ERASE YOUR NUMBER...
...OFF MY CELL PHONE?
THIS IS THE ONLY CHEAP HOTEL AROUND HERE.
Pretty obvious.
WHOA! A PSYCHIC?!
No, stalker?!
I'M LEAVING RIGHT AWAY,
BUT JUST ONE THING...
I see.
...
WHY?
YUP.
I DON'T...
...HATE YOU.
IF I'VE DONE SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU HATE ME, I'LL APOLOGIZE...
...BUT THIS IS REALLY NASTY! I DON'T LIKE IT.
THAT'S PRETTY HARSH.
THEN...

I...
IT'S MY POLICY NOT TO PART POORLY WITH SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT.
HUH?
WHAT?
SHAKE HANDS.
IF YOU DON'T HATE ME, THEN LET'S MAKE UP BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
"I SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT" OR..
"I SHOULD HAVE DONE MORE."
I DON'T EVER WANT TO FEEL LIKE THAT AGAIN.

I KNOW WE JUST MET YESTER-DAY,
BUT I...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE MET YOU BEFORE...
I...
PLEASE DON'T DISAPPEAR ON ME.

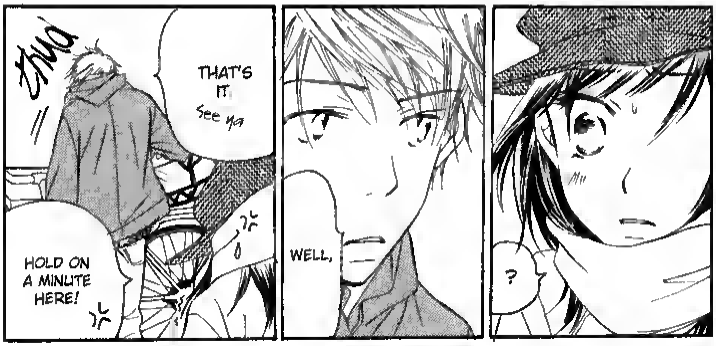
I WANTED TO DISAP-PEAR...
...WITHOUT LEAVING ANY MEMORY FOR YOU
I NEVER WANTED TO COME BACK TO THIS TOWN!
BUT NORA ...!
NORA ...?
WHAT THE—
YANK
WHO ARE YOU?

WHY IS THERE A PICTURE OF NORA ON YOUR CELL?!
So tease
AH. sowwy
CLICK
NORA ...?

I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A TABBY.
SORRY.
I LIED.
NO WAY ...
ON A RAINY DAY TEN YEARS AGO...
...I FOUND A BLACK CAT WITH YOU.
Please take him inside.
NORA.

I-DIDN'T WANT YOU TO REALIZE,
SAE-CHAN...
TAURA...?
I PUT THAT TOGETH-ER
TAURA IS MY MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME HIROKI IS MY FATHER'S NAME
TOUCH
TOUCH
TOUCH
TOUCH
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GUY
Stop touching!
SE...
gulp
SEX CHANGE?"

NA...
NACCHAN...?
YEAH.


THAT'S IT.
See ya
HOLD ON A MINUTE HERE!
WELL,
?

LET ME GO!
LIKE I'D LET YOU GO NOW!
Not satisfied!

RING RING
I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU...!
YOU NEVER WANTED TO COME BACK?!
YOU WANTED TO DIS-APPEAR ?!

Meow!
N...
HUH?
IT'S NORA ...
NORA ...?

NORA!
...
CLUNK
TA...
NO U
NACCHAN!
SQUEAK
GET ON!
WE'LL BE QUICKER ON THE BIKE!
FWOOSH

WHOOSH
HOLD ON TIGHT!
Whoa!
Let me! I'LL PEDAL.
Ah!
From the very beginning...
...I felt like I knew him.

Things we saw together.
The city. The landscape.
The smell of the wind.
I remember it all clearly.

Get off!
AH!
On the stairs!
What was ahead of us...

We knew...
...long before arriving there.
NORA!

Sae Yatsuki
Nora
SHI
SHIT!
HE'S GONE!
Where did you go?
I'M GETTING REALLY PISSED.
HE'S JERKING ME AROUND!
rustle
Nora
rustle
REALLY! I LOOKED HERE THE MINUTE I GOT IN THIS TOWN!
But he wasn't here!
I'LL GO LOOK OVER THERE.
Calm down.
NO!

WHAT?
WHAT IS IT?
rustle

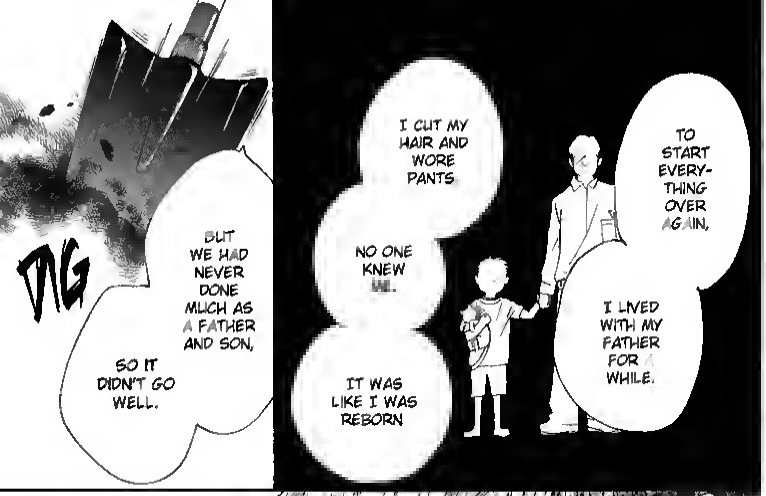
NO..
IT'S
NOT...
BECAUSE
WE JUST
...
YEAH
...
NO
NO
NORA
...?
IT'S
NORA
...
His body was completely desiccated.
He must have died at least a few weeks ago.

DON'T ASK ME.
I don't know
DIG
WHAT'S GOING ON?
DIG
HE'D BEEN GETTING WEEK, SO I'VE BEEN WORRIED
FOR A WHILE
I SHOULD HAVE COME HERE RIGHT AWAY
BEFORE HE BECAME LIKE THIS...
DIG
WHEN HE DISAPPEARED
I IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT ABOUT THIS TOWN.
HE WAS MY ONLY FAMILY...

EVER SINCE THAT FIRE...
The baby was a healthy boy weighing 3400 g.
But Nacchan's Mom couldn't accept that fact.
She decided to raise him as a girl.
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE DID IT, BUT SHE BRIBED SOME DOCTOR AND HAD A FAKE BIRTH CERTIFICATE MADE UP...
SHE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN SHE COULDN'T HAVE HID IT FOR LONG
REMEMBER HOW MY MOTHER WAS?
SHE DIDN'T GET ALONG WITH MY FATHER'S FAMILY AND THEY ALMOST SEVERED TIES.
BUT MY GRANDFATHER SAID IF SHE HAD A MALE CHILD, HE'D ADOPT HIM AND MAKE HIM A HEIR.
SO...
. SHE WANTED TO STOP THAT EVEN IF IT KILLED HER
THAT'S WHY SHE REGISTERED ME AS A GIRL,
AND DRESSED ME UP IN FRILLY OUTFITS.

MY FATHER GAVE UP LONG AGO.
BUT WITH THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COMING UP, THEY STARTED TO FIGHT AGAIN
FOR A LONG TIME...
...I JUST HATED THE WHOLE THING.
THE HOUSE THAT SHE PAINTED WITH LIES,
AND MYSELF WHO SAT THERE LIKE A DOLL.
SO ON THAT DAY OF THE FIRE...
...I NOTICED THE SMOKE FIRST,
BUT I JUST RAN.
WHAT IF MY MOTHER BURNED TO DEATH?
I WAS REALLY WORRIED BUT...
I DECIDED NEVER TO TURN AROUND. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED...
...I WOULD NEVER COME BACK TO THIS TOWN.
BUT I REALLY WANTED TO TAKE NORA WITH ME.

"IS THERE NOWHERE TO GO BACK TO?"
I WONDERED IF IT WAS WRONG TO TAKE HIM,
BUT ...
...I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH COURAGE TO LEAVE THE TOWN ON MY OWN..
RATTLE
Meow
Meow
RATTLE
HE CRIED SO LOUD ON THE TRAIN.
I BOUGHT AS MANY TRAIN TICKETS AND FOOD AS I COULD, WITH THE MONEY I HAD IN MY PURSE
AS FAR AS I COULD GO, FOR AS LONG AS I COULD.
I RAN AND RAN AND RAN
WHEN I WAS COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED, THE POLICE FOUND ME ...
AT THE HOSPITAL, I TOLD THEM EVERYTHING
"I WILL NEVER LIVE WITH MY MOTHER AGAIN."
I TOLD THEM THAT CLEARLY


DIG
BUT WE HAD NEVER DONE MUCH AS A FATHER AND SON,
SO IT DIDN'T GO WELL.
I CUT MY HAIR AND WORE PANTS
NO ONE KNEW ME.
IT WAS LIKE I WAS REBORN
TO START EVERY-THING OVER AGAIN,
I LIVED WITH MY FATHER FOR A WHILE.

COUGH
IN THE END,
I LEFT AROUND THE TIME I WAS GOING TO JUNIOR HIGH.
I DON'T REGRET IT.
NOW WE ALL LIVE SEPA-RATELY
THE FACT THAT I RAN AWAY. THAT I WRECKED EVERYTHING WITH MY OWN HANDS.
BUT...
...I'VE TRIED TO BE STRONG EVER SINCE THAT DAY.

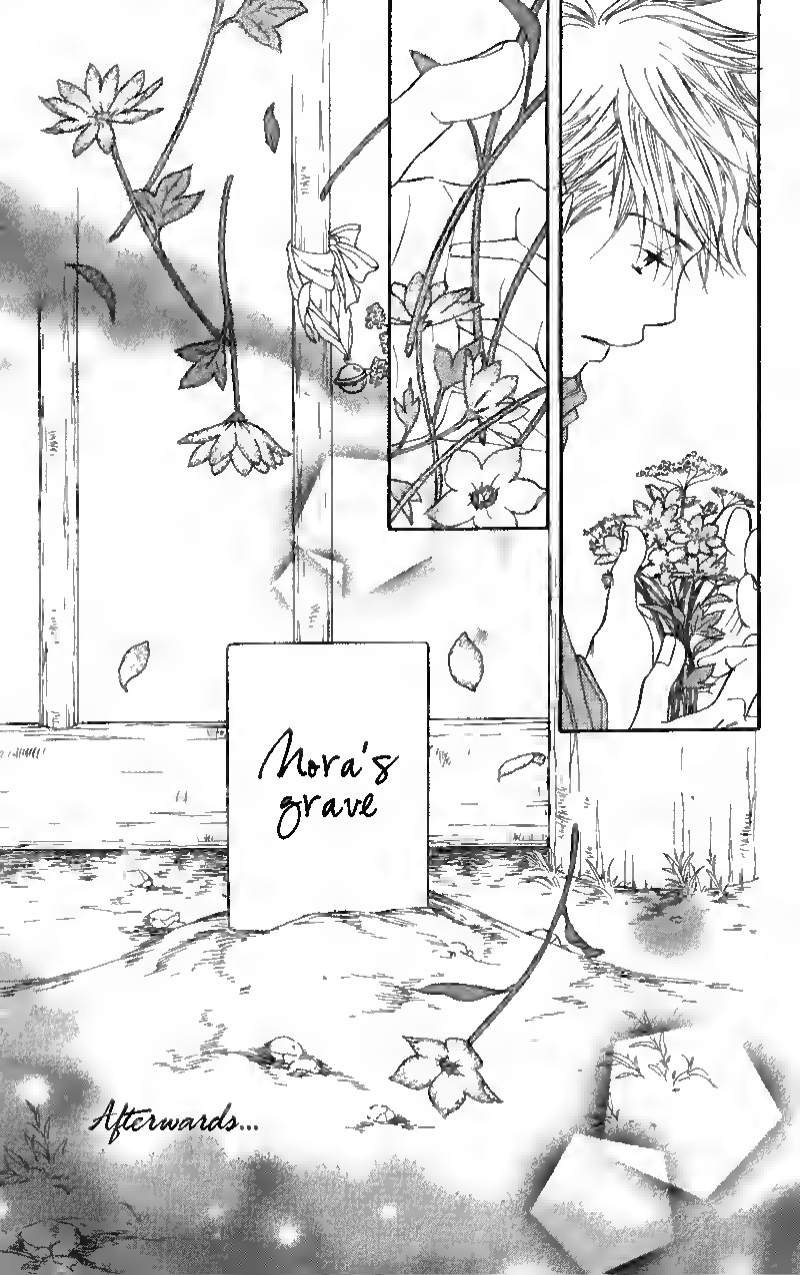
I WAS SCARED THAT...
...IF I SAW YOU, I'D REVERT RIGHT BACK TO BEING A SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL.
"Ride the train, travel through many cities, then what?"
IT'S NOT THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO COME BACK HERE.
I WAS SCARED.
I WAS SCARED OF SEEING YOU AGAIN...
NACCHAN ...

THERE'S A SEQUEL TO "THE ADVENTURE OF NORA,"
DID YOU KNOW?
ONE COLD DECEMBER DAY,
HE REMEMBERED THAT THERE WAS A WARM LIGHT
.. IN THAT STIFLING HOUSE
BUT SOMETIMES THE MEMORY OF HIS SWEET OWNER MADE HIM SAD
EH?
TAKING THE TRAIN, TRAVELING THROUGH CITIES
HE GREW IN BOTH MIND AND BODY NORA BECAME VERY STRONG
AND EVEN THOUGH, THE HOUSE WAS LONG GONE
FOR SALE
THERE WAS A CAT WAITING FOR HIM
SALE
Meow!

BEAT UP, BUT STRONG AND BIG NORA.
"YOU'VE GROWN SO MUCH."
SHE TELLS HIM,
"I LOVE YOU EVEN MORE NOW."

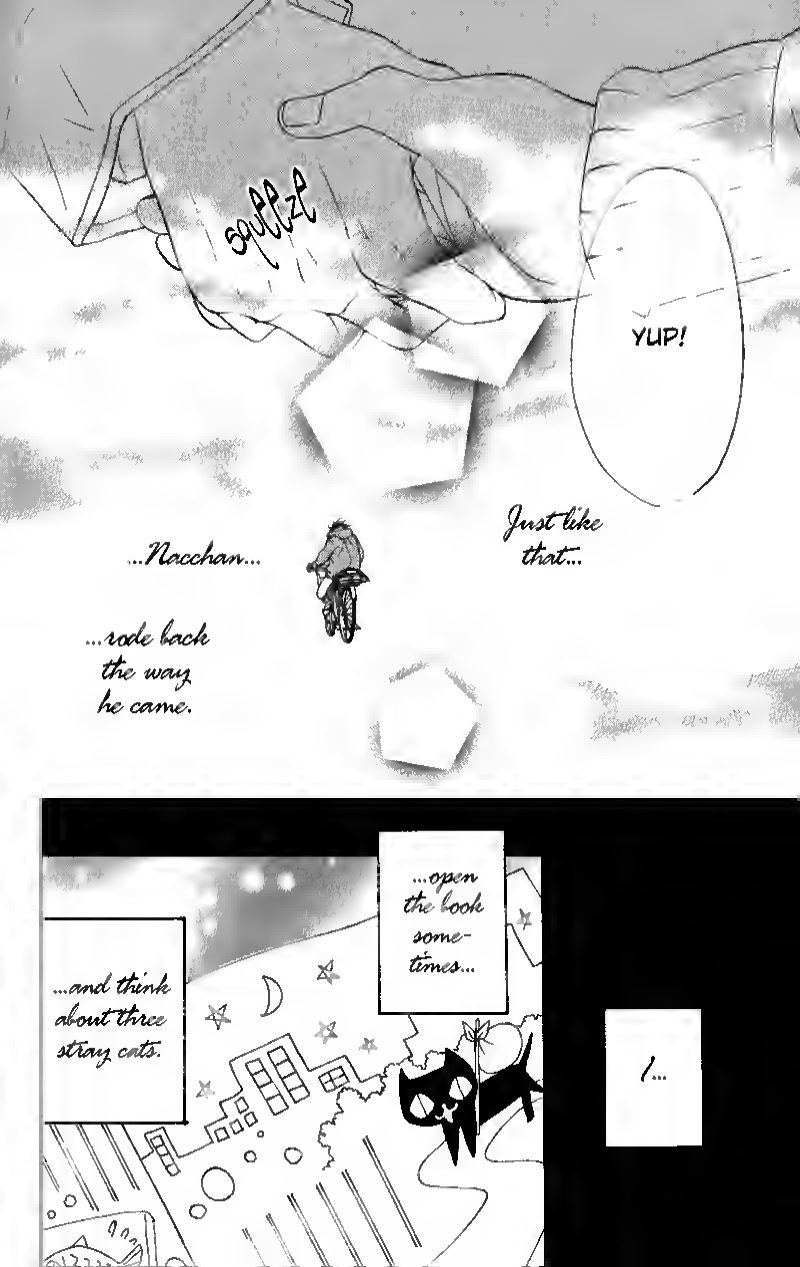
NORA GOES ON ANOTHER JOURNEY AFTER THAT.
I see. It's a popular series.
Then it continues in Volume three.
"THERE IS SOMEONE WAITING FOR ME."
"THERE IS SOME-WHERE I CAN REST."
THIS KNOWLEDGE MAKES NORA EVEN STRONGER.
NORA ...
HE WON'T EVER ..
...BE COLD AGAIN.
The black cat we saw...

NOT LIKE DOGS, BUT I HEARD THAT CATS COULD DO IT A BIT, TOO
REALLY...?
IT'S SO FAR AWAY THOUGH.
Maybe he really took the train.
Perhaps it was Nora's ghost...
...or a cat that looked a lot like him. We will never know.
Sue Natsuki's Nora
Nora's grave
SO CATS HAVE HOMING INSTINCT, TOO..
NORA...
...REALLY LOVED NACCHAN.
LIKE REALLY, REALLY, REALLY.
SO HE WANTED TO GIVE YOU A REASON TO COME BACK HERE...
Nora's grave
..YOU KNOW?


Nora's grave
Afterwards...

WHAT?!
YOU WILL TAKE ONE?! REALLY?!
You've the nicest person ever!
...we went to see the kittens at Morizo's place.
SEE YA.
YUP.
KEEP IN TOUCH.
I KNOW.
Nacchan...
...picked up the one that looked like Nora.
Meow!

NEXT TIME I COME BACK, I WILL BE A MUCH BETTER MAN.
HUH?
SO WAIT FOR ME?


squeeze
YUP!
Just like that...
...Nacchan...
...rode back the way he came.
...open the book sometimes...
...and think about three stray cats.
I...

And the one who is growing up fast next to him.
AH, IT'S FROM NACCHAN!
A picture
The one...
...who keeps on traveling.
The one who sleeps on a hill with a view of the sunset.
Mom's grave
Come back...
...one day.
So cute !!!
These little pads on his paw!

I will leave...
...the marking for you.
Sae
Natsuki
Nora
Nora's grave

2007.03.10 Ashihara Hinako

The Moon and the Lake

by Ashihara Hinako

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